RECIDIVISM IN NIGERIAN PRISON: A CASE STUDY OF ENUGU PRISON

A RESEARCH PROJECT

BY

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SUBMITTED TO

DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY AND SECURITY STUDIES
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TITLE PAGE

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A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY AND SECURITY STUDIES, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, ENUGU STUDY CENTRE, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B. SC) IN CRIMINOLOGY AND SECURITY STUDIES.

NOVEMBER, 2017

DECLARATION

I, **Jimoh Olalekan Idowu**, humbly declare that this work is a result of my research effort carried out in the Faculty of Social Sciences, National Open University of Nigeria, under the supervision of Professor Obiageli Omeje, and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of any University or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

21st December, 2017.

Jimoh Olalekan Idowu **Date**

CERTIFICATION

We certify that this research project was carried out by Jimoh Olalekan Idowu, in the Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, National Open University of Nigeria, Enugu Study Centre.

.....	24/12/17 .....
Professor Obiageli Omeje **Project Supervisor**	**Date**
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Mrs. M. T. Onyehalu **Ag. Study Centre Director**	**Date**
.....	.....
HOD	**Date**
.....	.....
Dean	**Date**
.....	.....
External Examiner	**Date**

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the fulfilment of God's eternal purpose for all humanity, through the Body of Christ.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My most special gratitude goes to God Almighty for seeing me through the research project. I owe my wholehearted gratitude to my erudite Supervisor, Professor Obiageli Omeje, who guided me through this project. Her firm suggestions and candid advice gave me the devotedness and motivation to put due effort into getting this work done.

I also wish to thank the current Controller of Enugu Prison, Mr. B. N. Ogbodo, for his kind permission to conduct this research at the Enugu Prison. Thanks are also due to the members of staff of Enugu Prison- ASP Oguama Doris, the Consec, Enugu Prison Headquarters, who hastened the approval of my letters; the tireless efforts of SP Michael Okoh, and ASP U.S. Awo, in my collection of data, at the Convict Prison.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASP	-	Assistant Superintendent of Police
BSc	-	Bachelor of Science
CSV	-	Convict Security Vulnerability
NOU	-	National Open University of Nigeria
NPS	-	Nigerian Prison Service
PPR	-	Prisoner Reintegration Programme
RR	-	Recidivism Rate
SP	-	Superintendent of Police
VOC	-	Vocational Training

ABSTRACT

Recidivism remains a persistent challenge within the Nigerian correctional system and poses serious implications for public safety, social stability, and national development. Despite the stated rehabilitative mandate of Nigerian prisons, a significant number of released inmates relapse into criminal behaviour and return to custody. This study examined the factors influencing recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison, Nigeria, from the perspectives of recidivist offenders themselves. Primarily guided by the Rehabilitation Theory, the study adopted a qualitative case study design. Purposive sampling was used to select twelve recidivist inmates who had previously been incarcerated and re-admitted into the prison system. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted within the prison facility. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using content and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that a combination of socio-demographic, institutional, and psychosocial factors influenced recidivism among inmates. Dominant themes included young age, male gender, unstable family backgrounds, poor educational attainment, and limited employability. Institutional factors identified included inadequate counselling services, ineffective rehabilitation and vocational training programmes, lack of trained personnel, overcrowding of prison facilities, poor classification of inmates, and the absence of structured aftercare and follow-up services after release. Psychosocial factors such as social stigma, rejection by family and community, peer influence, weak family support after release, substance abuse, emotional stress, and economic hardship further increased the likelihood of reoffending. The study also found that existing rehabilitation programmes were largely ineffective due to poor funding, inadequate facilities, and weak programme implementation. The study concludes that recidivism in Enugu Prison is largely a consequence of systemic rehabilitation failures and adverse post-release social conditions. It recommends the strengthening of rehabilitation programmes, the introduction of structured aftercare and reintegration services, and community-based interventions aimed at reducing stigma and supporting ex-convicts' reintegration into society.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

As the drive towards the incarceration of a growing number of offenders in correctional facilities continues, increasing attention is being given to what occurs once offenders are released back into society. Central to this concern is not only whether released offenders will commit additional crimes and thereby threaten public safety, but also what measures are in place to ensure that such individuals do not relapse into criminal behaviour after release (Altshuler, Armstrong, & Mackenzie, 2009). This concern is heightened by the uncertainty surrounding the community adjustment of offenders following release from what are often perceived as inadequate institutional reformation and rehabilitation programmes.

Beyond concerns about prevalence rates, contemporary criminological inquiry increasingly emphasizes the need to understand recidivism from the perspectives of offenders themselves. Quantitative indicators alone are insufficient to explain why individuals repeatedly return to crime after incarceration, particularly in contexts where institutional rehabilitation and post-release support systems remain weak. Consequently, there is growing recognition of the value of qualitative approaches that explore offenders' lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of prison rehabilitation and reintegration processes. This study adopts this perspective in order to provide deeper insight into the underlying dynamics of recidivism within the Nigerian correctional context.

Empirical evidence suggests that recidivism remains a persistent challenge within the Nigerian prison system. Soyombo (2009) reported that the prevalence rate of criminal recidivism in Nigerian prisons in 2005 stood at 37.3%, while Abrifor (2010) estimated the

prevalence rate at 52.4% in 2010. Since then, there has been little indication that this trend has significantly declined. Wilson (2009) further reported that studies conducted in Nigeria documented that approximately 81% of male criminal inmates and 45% of female criminal inmates were re-arrested within 36 months of discharge from prison custody. While these figures provide important historical insight into the magnitude of recidivism in Nigeria, they should be understood as indicative rather than definitive. Variations in data sources, measurement approaches, and reporting standards within the Nigerian correctional system make it difficult to establish precise and current national recidivism rates. Nonetheless, the persistence of recidivism over time suggests that the problem remains unresolved and warrants sustained empirical investigation.

The consistently high prevalence of recidivism indicates that in Nigeria, as in many other countries globally, high rates of inmate release are often accompanied by high rates of reoffending. Crime committed by ex-convicts therefore accounts for a substantial proportion of current and future criminal activity. This situation poses serious threats to peace, public safety, and the protection of lives and property, while also undermining social stability and economic development. As insecurity persists, investor confidence declines, economic activities are disrupted, and national development efforts are negatively affected.

The implications of recidivism extend beyond crime statistics to broader socio-economic consequences. Persistent criminal activities by recidivists have contributed to loss of lives and property, weakened national cohesion, and created an environment perceived as unsafe for both local and foreign investment. In some instances, businesses and investors are compelled to relocate to safer environments, resulting in significant economic losses and reduced opportunities for national growth. From a theoretical standpoint, the persistence of recidivism raises critical questions about the effectiveness of rehabilitation within

correctional institutions. Rehabilitation theory posits that offenders can be reformed through structured interventions that address behavioural, psychological, educational, and social deficits. High rates of repeat offending therefore suggest not merely individual failure, but systemic shortcomings in correctional rehabilitation and reintegration processes. This perspective provides a useful framework for examining recidivism in Nigeria, where correctional institutions are formally mandated to reform offenders but often lack the resources and structures required to fulfil this mandate effectively.

Existing studies have linked the prevalence of recidivism to a range of socio-demographic, economic, and environmental factors, including gender (Renauer & Henning, 2005; McElfresh, Yan, & Janku, 2009), lack of funds immediately after release (Rossi, Berk, & Lenihan, 1980), poor employability and low wage-earning capacity (Hinds, 1982; Meyers, 1984), poor educational attainment and unstable work history (Buikhuisen & Meijs, 1983; Eisenberg, 1985), neighbourhood environment (Gottfredson & Taylor, 1985), age at first arrest and type of offence (Pritchard, 1979), and age at release from confinement (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1984; Hoffman & Beck, 1985). Other studies have indicated that recidivism may be influenced by the availability of post-release job training programmes (Jengeleski, 1981), community treatment centre placement (Beck, 1981), and access to pre- and post-release educational programmes (Blackburn, 1981; Rose & Nyre, 1979). Although these studies identify important correlates of recidivism, much of the existing literature relies heavily on quantitative analyses that prioritise statistical associations over experiential understanding. There remains limited qualitative research in Nigeria that captures how incarcerated individuals themselves interpret the role of prison conditions, rehabilitation programmes, and post-release challenges in shaping their return to crime. This gap underscores the need for context-specific, experience-based inquiry into recidivism within Nigerian correctional facilities.

There is a school of thought that advocates prolonged confinement as a primary strategy for crime control. According to Altshuler et al. (2009), one justification for extended incarceration is the belief that confinement prevents offenders from committing additional crimes. However, evidence increasingly suggests that incarceration alone is insufficient to deter future offending once offenders are released. Imprisonment is also associated with several challenges, including high financial costs, overcrowding, and limited evidence of sustained reductions in re-arrest rates after release. These challenges highlight the disconnect between the goals of incarceration and the lived realities of offenders following release from prison.

Enugu Prison provides an appropriate case study for examining recidivism within the Nigerian correctional system due to its role as a major custodial facility housing offenders from diverse socio-demographic backgrounds and offence histories. Studying recidivist inmates within this setting allows for an in-depth exploration of how institutional conditions, rehabilitation practices, and post-release realities interact to influence repeat offending. By focusing on a single correctional institution, this study prioritises depth of understanding over broad generalisation, consistent with a qualitative case study approach.

Irrespective of differing perspectives on incarceration, imprisonment continues to play a central role in the criminal justice system. Incarceration is typically justified on the basis of four core principles: incapacitation, retribution, deterrence, and rehabilitation (Bartol, 2002). While incapacitation and retribution are often achieved during imprisonment, the majority of offenders will eventually be released back into society. Upon release, many face significant challenges, including weakened social bonds, unemployment, inadequate education or job skills, and housing difficulties (Petersilia, 2001; Windzio, 2009; Bales & Mears, 2008;

Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008). These challenges substantially increase the likelihood of unsuccessful reintegration and repeat offending.

Despite extensive discourse on incarceration and crime control in Nigeria, there remains insufficient qualitative evidence on how recidivist inmates perceive the effectiveness of rehabilitation and correctional programmes, as well as the social and institutional challenges they encounter after release. This study addresses this gap by examining the socio-demographic, institutional, and psychosocial factors influencing recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison, with the aim of generating contextually grounded insights that can inform rehabilitation policy, correctional practice, and reintegration strategies within the Nigerian correctional system.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Recidivism has become a persistent and troubling feature of the Nigerian criminal justice system. Despite repeated incarceration and the stated rehabilitative objectives of the Nigerian Prison Service, a significant number of offenders continue to return to prison after release. This recurring cycle of crime and re-incarceration raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of custodial sentences as a means of correcting criminal behaviour and reintegrating offenders into society. High recidivism rates not only undermine public safety but also place enormous strain on already overcrowded and under-resourced correctional facilities across the country.

In Nigeria, prisons are officially mandated to rehabilitate offenders through correctional programmes such as vocational training, counselling, education, and moral reformation. However, empirical evidence and observational reports suggest that these rehabilitative efforts are often inadequate, poorly implemented, or entirely absent in many correctional facilities. As a result, inmates are frequently released without the skills, psychological

support, or social preparation required to lead law-abiding lives. This situation is further compounded by harsh prison conditions, limited professional staffing, and the absence of structured post-release support systems.

Beyond institutional shortcomings, ex-convicts in Nigeria face severe social and economic challenges upon release. Social stigma, discrimination, unemployment, family rejection, and peer pressure create hostile environments that push many former inmates back into criminal activities as a means of survival. These psychosocial pressures significantly limit opportunities for reintegration and increase the likelihood of reoffending. Yet, many existing studies on recidivism in Nigeria have focused largely on statistical trends and institutional analysis, with limited attention to the lived experiences and personal narratives of recidivist offenders themselves.

The problem, therefore, lies not only in the persistence of recidivism but also in the limited qualitative understanding of the underlying factors driving repeat offending from the perspectives of those directly affected. There is a clear gap in knowledge regarding how institutional practices, social conditions, and personal experiences interact to influence recidivist behaviour within Nigerian prisons. Without such context-specific and experience-based insights, policy interventions and rehabilitation strategies remain poorly informed and ineffective. This study seeks to address this gap by qualitatively examining the factors influencing recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison, with the aim of contributing evidence-based insights for improving rehabilitation and reintegration efforts within the Nigerian correctional system.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors influencing recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison, Nigeria, from the perspectives of recidivist offenders. Specifically, the study

sought to explore how socio-demographic characteristics, institutional practices within the prison system, and psychosocial experiences before and after incarceration contribute to repeat offending. By adopting a qualitative approach, the study aimed to generate in-depth insights into the lived experiences of recidivist inmates and to assess the effectiveness of existing rehabilitation efforts within the Nigerian correctional system. The study also aimed to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving rehabilitation, reintegration, and crime reduction strategies.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

i. What socio-demographic factors influence recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison?
ii. How do institutional practices and conditions within the Nigerian prison system contribute to recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison?
iii. What psychosocial factors influence repeat offending among inmates in Enugu Prison?
iv. How do recidivist inmates perceive the effectiveness of existing rehabilitation and correctional programmes in Enugu Prison?
v. What measures can serve as effective strategies for reducing recidivism and improving rehabilitation and reintegration after release?

1.5 Research Objectives

It is often thought that the rate of recidivism is a clear indication of prison effectiveness or ineffectiveness in a country. This study is therefore aimed at ascertaining:

i. the socio-demographic factors influencing recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison

ii. the institutional factors within the prison system that contribute to recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison
iii. the psychosocial factors that influence repeat offending among inmates in Enugu Prison
iv. the recidivist inmates' perceptions of the effectiveness of existing rehabilitation and correctional programmes in reducing recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison, and
v. the measures for reducing recidivism and improving rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders within the Nigerian correctional system.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several important ways. First, it contributes to criminological and correctional research by providing qualitative insights into the factors influencing recidivism within the Nigerian prison system. Unlike many existing studies that rely heavily on quantitative data, this research focusses on the lived experiences and perspectives of recidivist inmates, thereby deepening understanding of the social, institutional, and psychological dynamics that drive repeat offending.

Second, the findings of this study are expected to be beneficial to policymakers and correctional administrators, particularly the Nigerian Prison Service. By identifying institutional weaknesses in rehabilitation, vocational training, counselling, and aftercare services, the study provides evidence that can inform policy reforms and the design of more effective rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. These insights can assist correctional authorities in developing interventions that address the root causes of recidivism rather than merely its symptoms.

Third, the study is relevant to practitioners in the criminal justice and security sectors, including prison officers, social workers, probation officers, and non-governmental

organisations involved in offender rehabilitation. Understanding the challenges faced by ex-convicts before, during, and after incarceration can help these practitioners design support mechanisms that reduce reoffending and promote successful reintegration into society.

Fourth, the study holds significance for the wider society by highlighting how inadequate rehabilitation and social exclusion contribute to persistent crime and insecurity. Reducing recidivism has direct implications for public safety, community stability, and national development. The findings underscore the need for community-based support systems and attitudinal change toward ex-offenders, which can foster social inclusion and crime prevention.

Finally, the study serves as a valuable academic resource for students and researchers in criminology, sociology, security studies, and related disciplines. It provides empirical reference material and identifies gaps for further research, particularly in the area of qualitative and experience-based studies on recidivism in Nigeria.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study focused on examining the factors influencing recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison, Enugu State, Nigeria. The scope of the study was limited to recidivist offenders, defined as inmates who had been previously incarcerated and subsequently returned to prison following reoffending. The study specifically explored socio-demographic, institutional, and psychosocial factors influencing recidivism from the perspectives of these inmates.

Geographically, the study was confined to Enugu Maximum Security Prison. This delimitation was necessary due to accessibility, time constraints, and administrative considerations. As a result, the findings of the study reflect the experiences and conditions

within this specific correctional facility and may not fully represent all prisons or correctional centres in Nigeria.

Methodologically, the study adopted a purely qualitative approach using in-depth, semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Quantitative methods, surveys, and statistical analysis were deliberately excluded, as the study sought to obtain detailed narratives and contextual understanding rather than numerical measurement. The sample size was limited to twelve recidivist inmates selected through purposive sampling, which allowed for in-depth exploration but limits broad generalisation of findings.

Thematically, the study was restricted to issues directly related to recidivism, rehabilitation, prison experiences, and post-release reintegration challenges. It did not examine judicial processes, policing practices, or crime prevention strategies outside the correctional context. Additionally, the study did not include the perspectives of prison staff, policymakers, or family members of inmates, focusing solely on the views and experiences of recidivist offenders.

These delimitations were necessary to maintain focus, depth, and feasibility within the scope of an undergraduate research project, while still providing meaningful insights into the problem of recidivism within the Nigerian prison.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

i. **Prison:** A state institution where individuals are lawfully confined, primarily as a form of punishment for criminal offenses, but also with the aims of rehabilitation, deterrence, and the protection of society, involving the loss of liberty and structured supervision by correctional authorities.

ii. **Prisoner Reintegration:** The process by which a released prisoner is accepted and reintegrated into his or her family and community, involving social, economic, and psychological adaptation to facilitate a successful return to society.

iii. **Recidivism:** The act of a person relapsing into criminal behaviour and returning to prison after a previous incarceration, often measured by rearrest, reconviction, and reimprisonment.

iv. **Recidivist:** An individual who has been released from prison but is later re-imprisoned due to a relapse into criminal behaviour.

v. **Reformation:** The process of changing a criminal's behaviour and mindset through deliberate interventions such as education, religion, work ethics, and discipline, with the aim of preventing future criminal activity and promoting rehabilitation.

vi. **Rehabilitation:** In this study, rehabilitation is regarded as a set of deliberate actions and interventions aimed at transforming an offender into a more complete, self-supporting, and better-functioning member of society, with the goal of reducing future criminal behaviour and promoting successful reintegration

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 The Concept of Recidivism

Recidivism is a technical term which, if construed narrowly, bypasses the important problem it represents- the problem of persistency in criminal behaviour. However, recidivism has variously been defined in previous investigations and studies such as return to custody for any reason, including technical violations (Verbrugge, Nunes, Johnson and Taylor, 2002). Others see it as a re-arrest (Benda, 2005), reconviction (Law, 2004), and re-incarceration (Deschenes, Owen, and Crow, 2006). Sani and Selo, recited by Ngwuoke (1993), see recidivism as being a criterion for all seasons since the meaning of the concept varies, with the Criminal Justice System involved. Maltz (1981) also states that recidivism in a Criminal Justice context could be defined as the reversion of an individual to criminal behavior after he or she has been convicted of a prior sentence and presumably corrected. However, Allen and Simonsen (1989) defined recidivism as the repetition of criminal behaviour; habitual criminality. These authors further stated that: *"In statistical practice, a recidivism rate may be any of a number of possible counts of instances of arrest, conviction, correctional commitment and correctional status changes, related to the number of repetitions of these events within a given period of time"* (Allen & Simonsen, 1989, p. 69). While some authors feel that there is need to standardize the definition of recidivism, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals noted in their volume, Corrections (1973) that: *"Recidivism is measured by (1) criminal acts that resulted in a conviction by a court, when committed by individuals who are under correctional supervision or who have been released from correctional supervision within the previous three years, and by (2)*

technical violations of probation and parole in which a sentencing or paroling authority took action that resulted in an adverse change in the offender's legal status."

In the Nigerian context, recidivism is also viewed as the relapse into criminal activity after intervention, sanction, or completion of a correctional programme (Ugwuoke & Igbo, 2003). The Nigerian correctional system faces rising rates of repeat offending, which are attributed to systemic failures such as poor rehabilitation programmes, overcrowded and underfunded correctional facilities, limited post-incarceration support, and societal stigmatization of ex-offenders (Ikoh, 2011; Ashibi & Adams, 2012). These circumstances force many ex-offenders back into crime, making recidivism a persistent aspect of Nigerian society. Furthermore, prison subculture, reintegration labelling effects, and employability redundancy of ex-convicts are significantly implicated as primary causative factors of recidivism in Nigeria (Ikoh, 2011).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by a combination of theories that help explain the social dynamics involved in the reintegration and recidivism of discharged prisoners. The primary framework is Rehabilitation Theory, which provides the main lens for understanding how correctional interventions can reduce reoffending. Complementary perspectives are drawn from Social Disorganization Theory, Social Control Theory, and Self Control Theory. Each of these offers unique insights into the broader social, institutional, and individual factors that shape recidivism and reintegration. These theories are selected because they address key dimensions of the research problem and provide a strong foundation for interpreting the findings.

2.2.1 Rehabilitation Theory

Rehabilitation Theory is the central framework for this study. Historically, rehabilitative ideas emerged with the rise of the penitentiary and later reformatory systems in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when punishment began to be seen as a means of moral and social reform rather than only retribution (Irwin, 1980; Welch, 1996). Early penitentiaries in the United States, such as those developed under the Pennsylvania and Auburn systems, reflected the belief that solitude, disciplined labour, and religious instruction could transform offenders into law-abiding citizens (Irwin, 1980). The later "medical model" in corrections further reframed crime as a kind of social or psychological illness that could be diagnosed and treated using psychiatry, psychology, and criminology (Welch, 1996).

The basic assumption of Rehabilitation Theory is that offenders are capable of change if given appropriate interventions and supportive conditions (Brooks, 2009). Crime is viewed as closely linked to structural and personal disadvantages such as poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, substance abuse, and mental health problems, rather than as a simple expression of inherent wickedness or fixed moral defects (Welch, 1996). On this basis, rehabilitation emphasises structured programmes such as counselling, education, vocational training, therapeutic treatment, and post-release aftercare that aim to reduce criminogenic needs and strengthen offenders' skills, coping capacities, and social integration (Brooks, 2009; Welch, 1996).

This theory is highly relevant to the present study because the findings from Enugu Correctional Facility highlight major gaps in rehabilitative services, including weak counselling, limited vocational opportunities, lack of structured aftercare, and the persistence of social stigma after release. These weaknesses are consistent with Rehabilitation Theory's expectation that recidivism is likely when correctional systems do not adequately address

offenders' underlying needs and vulnerabilities (Brooks, 2009). The narratives of recidivist inmates suggest that repeat offending often results from unmet rehabilitative needs and hostile post-release conditions, rather than simply individual moral failure, which supports the core assumptions of this theoretical perspective.

Rehabilitation Theory has also faced significant criticism. The medical model opened the door to interventions that were sometimes invasive or coercive, including psychosurgery, electroconvulsive therapy, and chemical castration, all justified as "treatment" (Welch, 1996). In addition, Martinson's (1974) influential "nothing works" review was widely interpreted to mean that rehabilitation programmes had little or no effect on recidivism; even though he later qualified his conclusions and subsequent scholars identified methodological flaws in his analysis, the review helped justify a shift towards more punitive policies (Irwin & Austin, 1997). Critics further argue that poorly designed, under-resourced programmes are unlikely to produce meaningful change and that rehabilitation alone cannot fully address broader structural drivers of crime (Irwin & Austin, 1997; Welch, 1996). Nevertheless, more recent evidence indicates that well-designed and properly implemented interventions can reduce reoffending, which justifies using Rehabilitation Theory as the primary lens for interpreting recidivism and rehabilitation in this study (Brooks, 2009; Welch, 1996).

2.2.2 Social Disorganization Theory

Social Disorganization Theory was developed by Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay of the Chicago School of Sociology in the early twentieth century. In their classic work *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*, Shaw and McKay (1942) mapped juvenile court cases across Chicago and discovered that delinquency was not evenly distributed but clustered in specific neighbourhoods, particularly those characterised by poverty, residential turnover, and ethnic heterogeneity. These high-delinquency areas remained relatively stable over time, even as

their populations changed, leading them to conclude that crime was strongly linked to neighbourhood structure rather than to the characteristics of particular ethnic or racial groups (Shaw & McKay, 1942).

The basic assumption of Social Disorganization Theory is that "place matters" in explaining crime. Communities marked by economic deprivation, population instability, family disruption, and weak local institutions have difficulty sustaining effective informal social control (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Later scholars broadened this perspective by highlighting both social and physical signs of disorder such as high population density, noise, graffiti, litter, abandoned buildings, and broken families as cues that conventional norms are not being enforced (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981). In such environments, residents struggle to supervise young people, build dense friendship networks, and participate in local organisations, weakening collective efficacy and allowing delinquent subcultures to flourish (Sampson & Groves, 1989).

In this study, Social Disorganization Theory is relevant because many recidivist inmates in Enugu reported returning to neighbourhoods characterised by unemployment, unstable families, poor housing, and limited community support. These settings mirror the disorganised communities described by Shaw and McKay (1942) and later authors, where weak informal controls and limited legitimate opportunities create conditions conducive to repeat offending (Sampson & Groves, 1989). When combined with the inadequacies of formal rehabilitation identified by Rehabilitation Theory, disorganised communities can undermine ex-offenders' efforts to desist, making recidivism more likely.

Despite its usefulness, the theory has notable weaknesses. It focuses primarily on neighbourhood-level characteristics and may understate the role of individual agency, life histories, and national-level structural issues such as state corruption, political instability, or

wider economic crises (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Furthermore, Social Disorganization Theory was originally formulated in Western urban contexts, and its direct application to Nigerian cities risks neglecting local cultural practices, informal economies, and kinship systems that also shape crime and reintegration (Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). For these reasons, this study treats Social Disorganization Theory as a complementary framework that helps contextualise community influences on recidivism, while placing Rehabilitation Theory at the centre of analysis.

2.2.3 Social Control Theory

Social Control Theory was propounded by Travis Hirschi in his seminal work *Causes of Delinquency* (1969). Hirschi challenged earlier perspectives that focused mainly on why people commit crime, arguing instead that the more fundamental question is why most people conform most of the time. He proposed that conformity is largely explained by the strength of an individual's bonds to conventional society, particularly to family, school, work, and broader social norms (Hirschi, 1969).

The theory rests on four main elements of the social bond: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief (Hirschi, 1969; Siegel & McCormick, 2006). Attachment refers to emotional closeness to significant others, such as parents, teachers, and peers; commitment captures an individual's investment in conventional goals, like education and career; involvement represents participation in prosocial activities that leave little time or energy for delinquency; and belief concerns acceptance of societal rules and values as legitimate. Social Control Theory assumes that crime is a real possibility for everyone, but strong bonds in these four domains reduce the likelihood of offending, whereas weak or broken bonds increase it (Lilly, Cullen, & Ball, 1995; Siegel & McCormick, 2006).

This theory is relevant to the present study because many recidivist inmates reported experiences consistent with weakened or broken social bonds, such as growing up in broken homes, having poor school histories, losing contact with family, and returning to communities where they felt rejected or stigmatised. These accounts fit Hirschi's (1969) argument that when attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief are eroded, individuals have fewer reasons to obey the law and are more vulnerable to reoffending. Social Control Theory therefore complements Rehabilitation Theory by highlighting the importance of family relationships, community connections, and meaningful involvement in legitimate activities as part of successful reintegration.

Nonetheless, Social Control Theory has been criticised on several grounds. Some scholars argue that it explains minor or adolescent delinquency better than serious, chronic, or organised crime, and that it does not always account for offenders who maintain strong bonds yet still engage in crime (Gibbons, 1994). The theory also tends to assume that existing social institutions such as schools, police, and families are always positive forces, which may not hold in contexts where institutions are corrupt, abusive, or ineffective (Lilly et al., 1995). In such settings, "bonding" to certain institutions may not reduce crime and could, in some cases, reinforce harmful behaviour. These limitations mean that Social Control Theory is used in this study as a secondary, supportive framework alongside the more intervention-focused Rehabilitation Theory.

2.2.4 Self-Control Theory

Self-Control Theory, also known as the General Theory of Crime, was developed by Michael R. Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi in their influential book *A General Theory of Crime* (1990). Building on earlier control perspectives, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argued that a single, relatively stable trait self-control lies at the root of most criminal and analogous

behaviours. They drew on ideas from routine activity theory, rational choice theory, and psychological research on impulsivity and risk-taking to formulate this broad explanation.

The central assumption of Self-Control Theory is that individuals with low self-control are more likely to seek immediate, short-term gratification without considering long-term consequences. Low self-control manifests as impulsivity, preference for physical over mental tasks, risk-taking, self-centredness, and difficulty delaying gratification (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). The theory traces the development of self-control primarily to early childhood socialisation and effective parenting; consistent monitoring, recognition of deviant behaviour, and appropriate discipline are viewed as crucial for building self-control. Once formed, self-control is thought to remain relatively stable across the life course, while criminal opportunities vary; thus, age-related declines in offending are attributed mainly to changes in opportunity rather than to fundamental personality change (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Siegel & McCormick, 2006).

In this study, Self-Control Theory is relevant because several recidivist inmates described patterns of impulsive decision-making, substance abuse, and difficulty resisting peer influence. These accounts can be interpreted as indicators of low self-control, which may interact with weak rehabilitation programmes and adverse social environments to increase the likelihood of reoffending. When read together with Rehabilitation Theory, Self-Control Theory suggests that effective correctional interventions should not only provide external support (such as jobs and housing) but also help offenders develop self-regulation, coping skills, and the ability to delay gratification.

However, Self-Control Theory has been widely debated. Although many studies find an association between low self-control and various forms of offending, other factors such as race, age at first offence, criminal history, and structural disadvantage also play important

roles, indicating that self-control alone cannot fully explain crime (Baron, 2003; Piquero, Moffitt, & Lawton, 2005; Unnever, Cullen, & Pratt, 2006). Critics also highlight a potential circularity: low self-control is often inferred from criminal or risky behaviour itself, making it difficult to separate cause and effect (Akers & Sellers, 2004). Some scholars argue that the theory underestimates the influence of social, economic, and cultural contexts which are factors that the qualitative data in this study show to be highly significant in shaping the lives of inmates and ex-inmates (Lilly et al., 1995; Siegel & McCormick, 2006). For these reasons, Self-Control Theory is used here as a supplementary lens that enriches, but does not replace, the more context-sensitive Rehabilitation Theory.

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

This section reviews existing empirical studies on recidivism with a focus on the key factors identified in previous research. The studies examined span different jurisdictions and methodological approaches, highlighting how socio-demographic characteristics, institutional and correctional conditions, as well as psychosocial and community-based factors influence repeat offending. The review provides an empirical foundation for understanding recidivism and situates the present study within existing scholarly discourse, while also identifying areas requiring further investigation, particularly within the Nigerian prison context.

2.3.1 Socio-Demographic Factors and Recidivism

Studies have shown far-ranging implications of social and cultural factors for the recidivism of discharged prisoners in society. Immerwahr and Johnson (2002), in their study of the perception of discharged prisoners, noted that prisoners' reintegration into the community was a rarely discussed issue. Nobody seemed to care about what happened to prisoners who were released into the community, how they were treated, and whether they would be able to rebuild their lives. Respondents believed that while prisoners had very little chance to learn

useful skills in prison, they had ample opportunity to acquire and reinforce negative behaviours. The study painted a predictable and distressing picture of prisoners leaving prison with few new positive or marketable skills and many bad habits. They have no supervision, and a hard time finding a job, including their inability to vote, drive, etc., contribute to their frustration and drive them back to crime. All of these, most of the respondents believed, lead to high rates of recidivism and a 'virtual revolving door', with people going back into prison almost as fast as they leave it.

This observation underscores the importance of both skill development and societal acceptance in reducing recidivism. Without addressing the broader social environment into which prisoners are released, even well-intentioned correctional efforts may fail.

Findings have also indicated that ex-offenders usually respond to the obvious socio-cultural implications of their new status, which invariably attracts limited social and economic prospects, by placing themselves in tight-knit insular networks of family and close friends for both material and non-material benefits essential to daily life. Successful re-entry requires ex-offenders to seek help from individuals and organisations that have the capacity to provide assistance and/or employment opportunities. Such resources are usually external to the ex-offenders' immediate insular network (ICJIA, 007). It has been noted that ex-offenders have expressed the desire to live more honestly, and to completely overhaul themselves, their lives, their kinship ties, and their views on the world if there are enabling laws and environmental conditions, which obviously have eluded them.

These findings suggest that personal motivation alone is insufficient to prevent recidivism; the availability of social and economic opportunities and supportive networks is essential for successful reintegration.

Igbo and Ugwuoke (2003) published the findings of a study they conducted with a sample of 200 prisoners in Enugu Prison, southeast Nigeria, intending to find out the factors contributing to high recidivism. The findings revealed that there is actually a high recidivism rate in Enugu Prison, which the researchers attributed to poor environmental conditions of the prison and the negative attitude of the public towards ex-convicts as the two major factors. Many prisoners actually come out of the prison truly repentant even without adequate reformation and rehabilitation. This is because deprivation of freedom and the harsh conditions of the prison, that prisoners experience for as long as their sentences last, actually instil the spirit of repentance and change of behaviour in them. It is the uncooperative and antagonistic attitude of society, together with the social stigma attached to "ex-convicts," that make their reintegration nearly impossible and therefore crime becomes their only source of solace and livelihood (Ugwuoke, 2010).

This study highlights the interplay between prison experiences and societal reception. While incarceration may foster behavioural change, external social barriers often negate these gains, increasing the risk of recidivism.

Furthermore, the social, medical, emotional, and legal challenges ex-prisoners face stifle their willingness and ability to prepare adequately for reintegration and to refrain from recidivistic behaviours. Confronted with uncertainty, animosity, and a multitude of personal, social, and legal barriers, most prisoners reenter what they perceive to be an antagonistic society with a defeatist attitude, and if not addressed, this attitude will likely lead to reintegration failure (Osaze, 1996).

The importance of prisoners' reintegration seems to have been ignored by policymakers and correctional administrators. High recidivism rates indicate that inmates are not prepared to return to society as law-abiding citizens. This is because major issues about their resettlement

are poorly coordinated and have failed to address social exclusion issues such as housing and addiction problems that could lead people back into crime (Berty, 2001). They are normally set free without proper arrangements for their rehabilitation and reintegration in society. Instead, the law itself denies them some civic rights as free citizens. They are not allowed to hold public office, as they are seen as being untrustworthy and unreliable. These, according to Osaze, are strong factors that militate against prisoners' reintegration within the community. Although there are a number of non-governmental agencies championing the cause of released offenders, their efforts are quite insignificant. This has been found to be one of the reasons for the high incidence of recidivism in Nigeria.

Ekpe and Mammah (1997) maintain that the discharged prisoner and all connected with him/her bear an odious stigma. It matters little that the discharged prisoner may have ended up in prison for purposes that may not be connected with crime. Communities where discharged prisoners come from are guilty of rejecting them to the point that they do not give them a chance to participate in most of the rituals and ceremonial activities that go on in those communities because of the belief that they are defiled (Ekpe & Mammah, 1997).

These studies collectively emphasise the dual influence of social stigma and policy neglect on recidivism. Without structural and community-based support, even prisoners who genuinely desire to reform are likely to reoffend.

In a meta-analysis, Cottle et al. (2001) identified risk factors that best predict recidivism. Researchers examined 30 factors across eight domains: demographic information, offence history, demographic and social factors, educational factors, intellectual and achievement scores, substance use history, clinical factors, and formal risk assessment. Regarding recidivism, the domains of demographic variables, offence history variables, and family and social variables were consistently significant. Two of four clinical factors were significant.

Risk assessments were identified as significant as well. Individually, the following factors, listed from highest to lowest, were identified as significant: 1) age at first commitment, 2) age at first contact with the law, 3) non-severe pathology, 4) family problems, 5) conduct problems, 6) effective use of leisure time, 7) delinquent peers, 8) length of first incarceration, 9) number of out-of-home placements, 10) number of prior commitments, 11) type of crime, 12) standardised achievement, 13) substance abuse, 14) full-scale IQ score, 15) history of special education, 16) assessment instruments, 17) history of abuse, 18) gender, 19) socio-economic status, and 20) number of prior arrests.

This comprehensive analysis shows that demographic and social factors are highly influential in predicting recidivism, reinforcing the argument that both individual and contextual variables must be considered in rehabilitation planning.

McElfresh, Yan, and Janku (2009) observed that nearly 41% of recidivating juvenile offenders reoffended within the first three months of their initial offence disposition date and nearly 29% of male offenders reoffended within 12 months, compared with 19% of females. Their findings of the logistic regression analysis for the juvenile offenders from calendar 2007 indicated that male offenders had greater odds of being recidivists than female offenders.

Benda's (2005) study of 300 female and 300 male graduates of a boot camp noted that there are noteworthy gender differences in predictors of tenure in the community without criminal recidivism in a five-year follow-up. The Cox proportional hazards models show that urban residence, childhood and recent abuses, living with a criminal partner, selling drugs, stress, depression, fearfulness, and suicidal thoughts are stronger positive predictors of recidivism for women than for men. Men are more likely to return to prison because of criminal peer associations, carrying weapons, alcohol abuse, and aggressive feelings. Job satisfaction and

education lengthen time in the community more for men than women, whereas the number of children and relationships are more important to tenure in the community for women.

Renauer and Henning (2005) compared the recidivism rates of samples of male and female perpetrators of intimate-partner violence processed in the criminal justice systems of Memphis and Portland. Their study found no gender difference in the likelihood of involvement in a future police report of domestic violence, either as a victim or a suspect (43% of the men and 44% of the women). Males were significantly more likely to recidivate as suspects-only (3% compared to 6%), and females were more likely to recidivate as victims-only (26% compared to 3%). A smaller%age of males (10%) and females (12%) were both suspects and victims in future incidents. According to these authors, men were more likely than women to be a repeated recidivist, and women were more likely to have multiple offence reports that listed them as victims.

Renauer and Henning (2005) findings suggest that female offenders most often fit the profile of abused women who were arrested a single time for fighting back against male perpetrators in self-defence. The Memphis sample consisted of 880 suspects (440 men and 440 women) identified in police reports as having committed a domestic-violence offence against a current or former heterosexual intimate partner in 1997. Suspects were included regardless of whether they had been arrested or not. The Portland sample consisted of 6,010 individuals (5,289 men and 721 women) who were identified in police reports as suspects in a domestic-violence offence in the year 2000. The Pearson Chi-Square statistical analysis was used in all the analyses to measure the association between the variables of interest, for example, gender and recidivism.

Research conducted by Menard, Anderson, and Godboldt (2007) shows that women also perpetrate Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and that their pattern of offending differs from

that of men. This study examines demographic (such as age, race, employment status, victim-offender relationship) and offence characteristics (for example presence of children during assault, use of death threats, drug use) as predictors of recidivism in a five-year follow-up among IPV offenders. Using court records from a large Midwestern city, this study examined 607 cases of IPV, 15.5% of which was perpetrated by women. The chi-square and t-test indicate that men and women differed significantly on most variables; logistic regression models were run separately for men and women.

Ouma (2009) studied juvenile delinquency in Bukedi and Bugisu to find out contributory factors affecting juvenile delinquency in the two districts. He found that 78% of the young criminal offenders belonged to the category of little or no education, and 22% in the other category. He concluded that, "In view of these results it would appear that it is true that little or no education is partly responsible for influencing criminal behaviour." Kibuuka (2011) studied sociological aspects of juvenile delinquency in Kampala and found a significant correlation between the level of education of his respondents and employment and juvenile delinquency when he observes that: "An offender's occupation is significantly associated with his level of educational attainment. The higher the level of education attained the greater the chances one has of being gainfully occupied." He also observed that "the greater%ages of offenders were idle and it is quite likely as others have already indicated that the idleness greatly contributes to their temptation to commit offences, which consequently leads them to imprisonment." He also revealed that urban areas produced more delinquents. His results indicated that: "Out of 723 young offenders, 252 (35%) were living in rural areas, while the other 65% lived in Kampala."

These studies highlight that education, employment, and urban living conditions interact in complex ways to shape recidivism risks, demonstrating the multidimensional nature of socio-demographic influences.

Sanyu (2010) also studied juvenile delinquency in Jinja and concluded that: “juveniles from large families are more prone to criminality than those from small families.” However, Ouma (2009) obtained contrary findings to this long-held view, that the size of the family has an influence on one’s criminality. He observed that the size of family was not related to juvenile delinquency. According to him, large families are not necessarily contributory to criminal behaviour among young offenders because there is no close association between size of family and juvenile delinquency. The extended family, for instance, is shrinking, and because of this disintegration, the family as a social institution is becoming smaller and more concrete. In the African context, today’s family is smaller in size, limited to father, mother, and the children, unlike in the past where the family was so extended as to include even distant relatives. This helped the parents to raise children as a community and to complement each other as the children belonged to the community. With the disintegration of the extended family, juvenile delinquency has increased. She also found that urban young people are more susceptible to crime than their rural counterparts. Her findings reveal that: “More than half of the respondents (76%) come from urban areas as compared to only 24% who come from rural areas.”

Mwanje (2013) studied recidivism in Luzira Prisons and found that recidivism had a bearing on age, sex, family size, education, as well as the type of neighbourhood in which the offender lives. He also found that 78% of the prisoners believe that they were brought to prison to be punished. He further found that some prisoners lose touch with their families and society and undergo or learn a new way of life, a process known as prisonisation, which is similar to assimilation. They learn to accept the prison as their home because they have lost their family rights and touch, and this explains why even if they are set free, they will commit other crimes and not fear going back to prison because they know it as their other home. This study shows that non-custodial sentences like fines, cautions, community service, and others

are important to an offender in as far as preventing the process of prisonisation, which encourages offenders to re-offend. However, the limiting factor is that the study does not specifically point out how community service relates to the rehabilitation of the offenders or how its legal and institutional framework impacts on recidivism.

Kasiko (2011) studied the adequacy of rehabilitation programmes in prisons in preparing women prisoners for a return to society. The research focused on Mukono Local Administration Prison. The research discovered that most women were rejected by society because they were ex-prisoners and most of them lost their property, husbands, and even lost touch with their children. This problem was compounded by the absence of rehabilitative programmes meant to prepare women convicts for a return to society. This research dwelt more on rehabilitation programmes in prison and not those in community service. Although it showed that family relations between a woman prisoner and her family were lost while in prison, the research does not show the relationship between community service and rehabilitation programmes for offenders.

Areas of high population have been associated with higher crime rates. These urban environments have more crime in both the juvenile and adult realms than rural areas (Stouthammer-Loeber, Loeber, Wei, Farrington, & Wikstrom, 2002; Agnew, 2001). Additionally, living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood is a dynamic risk factor for recidivism (Carcach & Leverett, 1999; Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Cottle et al., 2001; Kubrin & Stewart, 2006; Marczyk et al., 2003; Mbuba, 2004; Oberwittler, 2004; Pardini, Obradovic, & Loeber, 2006; Piquero et al., 2005; Vreugdenhil, van den Brink, Wouters, & Dorelleijers, 2003; Weerman & van der Laan, 2006; Wilson, Riojas, Hapanen, Duxbury, & Steiner, 2001).

Socio-economic status (SES) is inconsistently reported with regard to recidivism. SES is found to be unrelated to minor juvenile delinquency (Agnew, 2001; Stouthammer-Loeber et

al., 2002; Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2003). Cottle et al. (2001) concluded SES to be the weakest variable identified via meta-analysis in predicting recidivism. However, offenders with low SES have been linked to higher rates of serious delinquency. Agnew (2001) attributed the higher rates of delinquency within lower SES to chronic offenders. Socio-economic status was not associated with violent behaviour (Stoddard et al., 2012).

A mutual relationship between negative family interactions and juvenile delinquency is documented in numerous studies. Factors such as abuse and neglect, domestic violence, conflicts with parents, and questionable parental lifestyles have been identified as risk factors for juveniles (Tolan, 1997; Tolan et al., 2003; Agnew, 2001; Brenda & Toilet, 1999; Hawkins et al., 1999; Piquero, Brame, & Moffitt, 2005). Likewise, serious delinquency and offences are found to be influenced by factors such as poor parental bonding, insecure attachment, poor parenting practices, parental neglect, family stress, and a low SES (Henry, Caspi, & Moffitt, 1996; Hoeve et al., 2008, 2009; Sentse, Lindenberg, Omvlee, Ormel, & Veenstra, 2009).

Farrington, Barnes, and Lambert (1996) identified a proportionately small number of families responsible for a large portion of crimes. This study has generated several subsequent studies dedicated to understanding the familial influence in juvenile offending. Van de Rakt, Nieuwbeerta, and Apel (2009) identified a correlation between intergenerational offending, but did not identify this relationship as significant. Paternal criminal history was also found to have a direct effect on juvenile delinquency (Thornberry, Freeman-Gallant, Lizotte, Krohn, & Smith, 2003).

Donald, Bretous, Fischer, and Drane (2002); Hjalmarsson and Lochner (2012). Specifically, poor literacy and numeracy, poor class attendance, grade retention, failure of school, and

special education placement have been found to increase risk of recidivism. Low academic achievement

is a strong predictor of recidivism even when other social and demographic factors are controlled. Offenders with poor literacy skills or low IQ are more likely to commit more serious offences (Cottle et al., 2001; Carcach & Leverett, 1999; Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Pardini et al., 2006). Similarly, higher dropout rates are associated with increased delinquency (Farrington et al., 1996; Aizer & Doyle, 2015; Neild et al., 2008; Valois et al., 2002).

Taken together, socio-demographic factors clearly play a substantial role in recidivism. Age, gender, family background, education, employment, socio-economic status, and neighbourhood conditions interact in complex ways to either increase or mitigate the likelihood of reoffending. Studies consistently show that both individual characteristics and social environments must be considered in designing interventions aimed at reducing recidivism. However, these do not operate in isolation from institutional and environmental influences.

2.3.2 Institutional and Correctional Factors Influencing Recidivism

Many studies on prison programmes or institutional factors have focused on whether ex-offenders benefit from formal rehabilitation programmes and other prison experiences. A central assumption is that prison experience is pivotal in determining the readiness of prisoners to reintegrate into society. Numerous studies have demonstrated that institutional environments have both criminogenic and anti-criminogenic effects (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Gendreau, 1996). Prisonisation, defined as the process by which inmates adapt to the norms of the prison environment, has been associated with increased recidivism (Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958).

The adequacy of rehabilitation and correctional programmes has a direct influence on recidivism. In many Nigerian prisons, lack of vocational training, educational opportunities, and psychosocial support contributes to ex-offenders' inability to reintegrate (Kasiko, 2011; Igbo & Ugwuoke, 2003). The absence of structured rehabilitation programmes means prisoners leave prison without essential life skills, making them more likely to re-offend.

Community service programmes and alternative non-custodial sentences have been observed to mitigate the effects of prisonisation and reduce recidivism (Mwanje, 2013). Offenders engaged in such programmes maintain stronger social ties and avoid full immersion in criminal subcultures that are prevalent in correctional facilities.

Institutional stigma and societal rejection of ex-prisoners undermine rehabilitation efforts. Prisoners often experience discrimination, loss of property, and broken family ties post-release (Kasiko, 2011). This social and legal marginalisation creates a hostile environment for reintegration, increasing the probability of recidivism.

Overall, these findings suggest that the quality of institutional programmes and the social environment post-release are critical determinants of recidivism. Rehabilitation must extend beyond the prison walls to include community-based support and societal reintegration mechanisms.

2.3.3 Psychosocial and Community-Based Factors

Ex-offenders' psychosocial adjustment is critical for preventing recidivism. Research has highlighted that factors such as family support, community networks, mental health, and social acceptance play a significant role in reintegration (Immerwahr & Johnson, 2002; Osaze, 1996).

Peer influence, delinquent social networks, and neighbourhood effects have been found to significantly contribute to recidivism. Juveniles and adults residing in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with high crime rates are more likely to re-offend due to exposure to antisocial peers and limited pro-social opportunities (Stouthammer-Loeber et al., 2002; Agnew, 2001; Carr & Vandiver, 2001).

Psychosocial interventions that target mental health issues, substance abuse, and social skills development have been identified as effective in reducing re-offending rates. These programmes help ex-offenders develop coping mechanisms and resilience against criminogenic influences in the community (Benda, 2005; Renauer & Henning, 2005).

The role of community integration and family cohesion cannot be overstated. Supportive families and communities provide emotional, financial, and social resources that enhance the likelihood of successful reintegration (Farrington et al., 1996; Henry et al., 1996; Hoeve et al., 2008, 2009).

Studies also emphasise the importance of social services, mentorship programmes, and community policing initiatives in reducing recidivism. These interventions create structured support systems that encourage law-abiding behaviour and facilitate access to employment, housing, and education for ex-offenders (Alitucker et al., 2006; Calley et al., 2012).

These studies collectively indicate that psychosocial support and community integration are essential components of recidivism prevention. Without adequate support networks, ex-offenders are vulnerable to returning to criminal behaviours despite any prior rehabilitation efforts.

2.3.4 Gaps in Existing Studies

Despite the many studies on recidivism, several gaps remain. Most research relies mainly on quantitative methods and secondary data, with little attention to the personal experiences of recidivist offenders. In Nigeria, most studies have focused on prison conditions and general patterns of reoffending, while few have looked closely at how socio-demographic, institutional, and psychosocial factors work together to affect repeat offending. In addition, much of the research comes from foreign prison systems, which may not apply directly to Nigerian prisons.

These gaps show the need for a detailed, qualitative study of Enugu Prison. The present study therefore explores the experiences and views of recidivist inmates, focusing on how personal background, prison conditions, and social factors influence reoffending. Studying these areas gives practical insights that add to what is already known about recidivism.

To address these gaps, this study uses a qualitative case study approach at Enugu Prison, aiming to understand how socio-demographic, institutional, and psychosocial factors together shape repeat offending.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODODLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used for the study. The main issues discussed here are the research design, research population, sample and sampling technique, source of data and data collection methods, and method of data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study design to examine the factors that influence recidivism from the point of view of ex-inmates. A qualitative approach was chosen because it focuses on understanding people's experiences and views in detail, rather than just measuring variables with numbers. Qualitative research is useful for exploring the "how" and "why" of social issues, which fits the aim of this study which is to understand why some released prisoners return to crime. Enugu Prison was used as the case study so that the research could look closely at how individual and institutional factors interact in a real-life setting. This design made it possible to collect rich, narrative information through interviews and to identify themes and patterns that emerged from the inmates' own stories.

3.2 Research Setting

The field study was carried out at Enugu Maximum Security Prison, located in Enugu city, Enugu State, Nigeria. Enugu which is the state capital city hosts one of the major prisons in the state, and this facility is the largest of them. It was originally designed to accommodate about 638 inmates, but by 2024 it held roughly 2,685 inmates, making it heavily overcrowded and putting serious pressure on available resources. These conditions make Enugu Correctional Facility a particularly important site for studying recidivism. The facility houses both convicted inmates and those on remand under the Nigerian Correctional Service, Enugu

Command. Focusing on this location is relevant because it provides access to recidivist inmates whose experiences can reveal how institutional conditions and psychosocial factors influence reoffending. Overall, the prominence of Enugu Prison and its challenging environment make it a suitable context for a qualitative study on recidivism.

3.3 Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The target population for this study was the recidivist inmates in Enugu Prison. These are inmates who had been convicted in the past and were serving a new sentence for another offence. From this group, the researcher used purposive sampling to select participants. Purposive (or judgmental) sampling means deliberately choosing people who have the specific characteristics needed for the study, rather than selecting them at random. In this case, only inmates who had experienced re-incarceration and who were available and willing to participate were included. This type of sampling is common in qualitative research when the aim is to study a particular subgroup in depth, because it focuses on a small number of information-rich cases that share the relevant experience.

A total of 12 recidivist inmates were interviewed. This number was considered adequate for reaching thematic saturation, which is the stage where additional interviews no longer produce new or important themes. Previous qualitative studies suggest that saturation can often be reached with around a dozen interviews when the group being studied is fairly similar in background and experience. The participants in this study were all adults (18 years and above) and each had at least one prior conviction. Every selected inmate gave informed consent before taking part. This non-probability sampling approach was appropriate because the research was exploratory and required detailed information from those most directly affected by recidivism.

3.4 Research Instruments

Data for this study were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. An interview guide was developed by the researcher which draws from the study objectives and relevant literature. The guide contained open-ended questions and prompts on issues such as the inmates' background, criminal history, experiences in prison, and their views on the factors that contributed to reoffending. The questions were written in simple, neutral language to encourage detailed and honest responses.

The interview guide was reviewed by the project supervisor and pilot-tested with a small number of inmates who were not included in the final sample, in order to check for clarity and relevance. The semi-structured format made it possible for the researcher to ask follow-up questions and probe important points, while still allowing respondents to speak freely in their own words. This instrument was suitable for the study because it generated rich qualitative data that were directly linked to the research objectives.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

Before data collection started, the researcher obtained official approval from the Nigerian Prison Service, Enugu Command. An introduction letter and brief explanation of the study were submitted through the appropriate channels, and the prison management gave permission for the research to be carried out. After this, the researcher, assisted by one field assistant, visited Enugu Correctional Facility on agreed dates. With the help of prison warders, inmates who met the selection criteria (that is, those who were re-offenders) were identified. Each eligible inmate was approached individually, the purpose of the study was explained, and verbal informed consent was obtained before any interview took place.

Interviews were conducted one-on-one in a private area within the facility to encourage confidentiality and honest responses. Warders stayed nearby and, when necessary, helped to clarify or translate questions into the local language, but did not interfere with the discussion. Each interview lasted about 30 to 45 minutes and followed a conversational style. At the beginning, the researcher reminded participants that there were no right or wrong answers and that their responses would be treated as confidential. With the respondent's permission, interviews were audio-recorded, and where consent for recording was not given, the researcher took detailed handwritten notes instead. The interviews were guided by the interview schedule but remained open-ended so that participants could expand on issues they considered important. After each session, the recordings or notes were transcribed word-for-word by the researcher. These interview transcripts formed the main set of data used for the analysis, and every step from fixing interview times, obtaining consent, conducting the sessions, to transcribing the data, was carefully recorded for reference.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analysed using content analysis and thematic analysis. After data collection, the researcher read through each interview transcript several times to become familiar with the responses and to gain a clear overall understanding. The transcripts were then coded manually by marking and labelling important statements and ideas. Similar codes were brought together and organised into broader categories. From these categories, main themes were developed in line with the research objectives. For instance, issues relating to stigma and peer influence were grouped under a "Social Factors" theme, while comments about counselling, vocational training, and prison conditions were placed under an "Institutional Factors" theme. The themes were checked and refined by comparing them across different participants to ensure consistency. This step-by-step process followed

standard procedures for thematic analysis and helped to keep the analysis systematic and closely linked to what the participants actually said, while still using their own words and meanings as much as possible.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the research ethics committee of the National Open University of Nigeria and from the relevant prison authorities. Before each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, what participation involved, and made it clear that taking part was completely voluntary. Written or verbal informed consent was obtained from every participant.

Participants were assured that their information would be kept confidential. Names and other personal details were not recorded, and all identifying information was removed from the interview transcripts. In reporting the findings, data were presented in general or grouped form rather than in a way that could reveal any individual. Inmates were also informed that they could refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

The researcher avoided collecting sensitive personal information that was not directly related to the study objectives. Throughout the research process, ethical guidelines for working with incarcerated people were followed, with particular attention to respecting participants' dignity, protecting their privacy, and minimising any possible risk or discomfort.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations were in the course of this study. First, the study's findings are based on a small, non-random sample from a single prison, which limits generalizability. The sample of 12 inmates provided depth but cannot represent all recidivist experiences in Nigeria. Second,

data were self-reported, so responses may be influenced by recall bias or social desirability (inmates might under- or over-state certain factors). Third, language and literacy barriers (even with warder assistance) may have affected some responses. Fourth, the prison environment may have introduced selection bias: only inmates willing and deemed suitable by warders could participate, possibly excluding more marginalized voices. Fifth, the study did not include input from prison staff or family members, so perspectives are uni-dimensional. Finally, the cross-sectional design captures inmates' views at one point in time; it cannot establish how perceptions or circumstances change over time. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable qualitative insights into recidivism in Enugu Prison, with transparency about its context and constraints.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study on recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison, Nigeria. The data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twelve recidivist inmates, purposively selected for their direct experience with reoffending. In line with Chapter Three, the analysis is organised around the study's research questions and objectives, focusing on socio-demographic, institutional, and psychosocial factors influencing recidivism. The findings are presented thematically, supported by direct quotes from respondents, and linked to relevant literature and theoretical frameworks.

The respondents' profiles are summarised in Table 4.1, showing their age, gender, family background, education, occupation, marital status, and recidivism count. These socio-demographic details provide the basis for interpreting the themes that emerged from the study. Analysis was carried out step by step, with transcripts coded for recurring issues such as overcrowding, stigma, and inadequate rehabilitation, and then compared with the research objectives. The findings are presented thematically, supported by direct quotations from respondents (R1-R12) and additional excerpts where needed. They are discussed in line with the study's theoretical framework of rehabilitation theory and the labelling perspective outlined in Chapter Two.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Recidivist Respondents

Respondent	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Family Background	Education	Occupation	Recidivism Count

R1	42	Male	Single	Single-parent	B.Sc.	Trader	2 Times
R2	23	Male	Single	Polygamous	SSCE	Bus Conductor	2 Times
R3	34	Male	Single	Broken	HND	Engineer	2 Times
R4	40	Female	Single	Broken	OND	Bricklayer	2 Times
R5	30	Female	Married	Polygamous	B.Sc.	Unemployed	2 Times
R6	26	Male	Single	Polygamous	Primary	Panel Beater (Trainee)	3 Times
R7	42	Male	Divorced	Extended	Primary	Driver	4 Times
R8	32	Male	Single	Nuclear	SSCE	Unemployed	3 Times
R9	33	Male	Married	Polygamous	SSCE	Trader	2 Times
R10	28	Male	Single	Broken	SSCE	Salesperson	2 Times
R11	30	Male	Single	Extended	SSCE	Trader	2 Times
R12	36	Male	Divorced	Extended	Primary	Tricyclist	3 Times

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

Table 4.1 reveals a sample dominated by males (83%), young adults (mean age 33 years), and those from non-nuclear families (92%), consistent with purposive sampling for recidivism risk factors (Katsiyannis & Archwamety, 1997).

4.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

4.2.1 Age of Respondents

Respondents were aged 23 to 42 years (average 33.2). Most (75%) were under 40. Young age was linked to recidivism because of impulsivity and friends. R2 (23, Bus Conductor) said:

"As young boy, peer pressure strong... we drink, smoke, and plan night work together." This claim is further corroborated by Miner (2002), who, in a study of predictors of recidivism in serious juvenile sex offenders, found that youths who began offending at younger ages were at increased risk of reoffending.

Table 4.2: Age Distribution and Recidivism Frequency

Age Group	Frequency	%	Average Recidivism Count
20-29	4	33	2.25
30-39	4	33	2.50
40+	4	34	2.75
Total	**12**	**100**	**2.42**

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

Older groups had more recidivism (e.g., R7, 42, 4 times). This shows the build-up of problems (Puzzanchera et al., 2003).

4.2.2 Gender of Respondents

The demographic analyses of the survey showed that 10 (83%) of the respondents were male, while the remaining 2 (17%) were female recidivists in the sample. This indicates that there was unequal distribution between the two genders, hence recidivism may be more pronounced among male ex-convicts in the society.

Table 4.3: Gender Distribution and Recidivism Patterns

Gender	Frequency	%	Average Recidivism	Key Themes Reported
Male	10	83	2.6 times	Peer influence, unemployment, transport crime

Female	2	17	2.0 times	Stigma, family rejection, shop theft
Total	**12**	**100**	**2.5 times**	

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

In line with this result, Wilson (2009) reported that studies conducted in Nigeria have documented that 81% of male criminal inmate offenders and 45% of female criminal inmate offenders were re-arrested within 36 months of discharge/release from the prison custody. Studies on recidivism have linked its high prevalence to some observable factors such as gender (Renauer and Henning 2005; McELfresh, Yan and Janku, 2009).

4.2.3 Family Structure/Background

Results from Table 4.4 below show that 92% of the respondents were from non-nuclear homes and did not grow up in families that were intact. Just 8% of the respondents claimed to have been brought up in a nuclear family structure. Others claimed to be from broken homes-42% from polygamous backgrounds, and 50% broken homes (single-parent homes, separated homes, and extended family homes). This indicates that the structure of the family in which an individual was brought up may account for criminal tendencies and recidivism. Conforming to this result, for children, the disruption of life due to parental death or divorce, represents a great upheaval of normal life. It may be followed by many other stressful experiences such as residential deterioration in the economic situation, diminished parental availability, parental discord and increased emotional problems (Wallerstein & Blakeslee Etherington et at. 1998).

Association between broken home and delinquency for both boys and girls has been shown in several earlier studies (Offord et at. 1979, Wadsworth 2009, Adler 995). Separation from a parent during the first years of life (between 0 and 4 years) was particularly strongly associated with severe offences such as robbery and assaults (Worth 2009). R5 (Polygamous)

said: *"Competition among wives' children... nobody really watch you."* Family background combined with other risk factors, such as complications, CNS impairments, substance use or psychiatric disorders, seems especially harmful (Hughes et at. 1991). Wells and Rankin (2011) conducted a meta-analysis consisting of 50 different studies of broken homes and juvenile delinquency, which indicated that the prevalence of delinquency of offspring was 10 - 15 in single-parent families than in intact families. However, the findings concerning family background and juvenile delinquency are inconsistent (Sokol-Katz *et al,* 2007).

Table 4.4: Family Background and Recidivism

Family Type	**Frequency**	**%**	**Average Recidivism**
Polygamous	5	42	2.4
Broken/Extended	6	50	2.7
Nuclear	1	8	3.0
Total	**12**	**100**	**2.5**

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

4.2.4 Education of Respondents

Results from the Table 4.5 below show that only 4, which is 33% of the recidivists in the sample, had tertiary education. Among these four respondents, 2 were first degree holders while the other 2 were polytechnic OND graduates. The remaining 6 (67%) of the respondents were 50% O'level and 17% Primary School Certificate holders. This result may imply that criminal tendencies and recidivism may have a significant relationship with educational attainment.

Table 4.5: Education Levels and Recidivism Patterns

Education Level	Frequency	%	Average Recidivism	Key Themes Reported
Tertiary (B.Sc., HND, OND)	4	33	2.25 times	Wasted education shame, job rejection
Secondary (SSCE)	6	50	2.5 times	Limited job options, peer influence
Primary	2	17	3.5 times	Easy crime entry, no alternatives
Total	**12**	**100**	**2.5 times**	

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

Thus, poor education and unstable work history may contribute to the rate of recidivism in the society (Buikhuisen and Meijs, 1983; Eisenberg, 1985). R6 (Primary) said: *"No school make me easy to follow bad boys."* In line with these results, Tenibiaje (2013) reported that educational attainment and peer group influence are predictors of increase in the rate of recidivism among male prisoners in Ekiti State, South west, Nigeria.

4.2.5 Occupation of Respondents

Results from the Table 4.6 below show that 75% of the respondents in the sample reportedly had unskilled informal jobs. Among the jobs highlighted in this category were trading, salesperson, public transport driving, panel beating, bus conductor, brick laying, tricycling and carpentry. In contrast to this, only 8% of the respondents had a skilled job of mechanical engineering, while the remaining 17% claimed not to have any job. R11 (Trader) said: *"Na because steady income no dey, na im make I go dey do shady phone business."* This result may imply that lack of funds immediately following release from prison (Rossi, Berk, and Lenihan, 1980), poor employability and low wage-earning capacity (Hinds, 1982; Meyers, 1984), are potent predictors of recidivism. Similarly, in a study carried out by Ogunkola

(2011), his results pointed to lack of education as a major predisposing factor for crime rates and recidivism among Nigerian youths especially among street urchins and Motor Park touts.

Table 4.6: Occupation Types and Recidivism Patterns

Occupation Type	Frequency	%	Average Recidivism	Key Themes Reported
Informal/Unskilled (Trading, Driving, Sales)	9	75	2.4 times	No steady pay, peer pressure, quick money needs
Skilled (Engineering)	1	8	2.0 times	Job loss stigma, underemployment
Unemployed	2	17	2.5 times	Desperation, no alternatives
Total	**12**	**100**	**2.5 times**	

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

4.3 Institutional Determinants of Recidivism

The institutional factors highlighted in this study were the availability of professional counselling, psychiatric services, and vocational training for inmates and ex-convicts, as well as overcrowding of prison facilities, poor classification of inmates, and the absence of structured aftercare and follow-up support after release.

4.3.1 Unavailability of Counselling

Respondents were asked if they received counselling during and after their initial incarceration. Based on the content analysis of the responses, it was noted that the majority of the recidivists had received counselling from prison officers during their initial release, albeit most of these counselling sessions were informal and provided at the point of initial release. There were also claims by a few of the respondents to have received informal counselling

from significant others after their initial release such as from clerics, family elders, parents and friends. However, none of the respondents claimed to have received any other form of professional counselling from other government agencies and other registered NGOs. Below are some of their verbatim responses:

> *"No person counsel me after that first time I was release. It is only the Prison Oga that call all of us inside his office and tell us that God have give us another grace to be somebody in life. Na only him give me advise when them want to release me."* (R9, 33, Male, Polygamous, SSCE, Trader).

> *"I receive plenty of advice from my Priest after I commot for prison that time. He even tell me say make I no go back go meet my friends, him say that they are bad friends."* (R2, 23, Male, Polygamous, SSCE, Bus Conductor).

These results which suggest that none of the recidivists received professional counselling implies that lack of professional counselling may be a significant predictor of recidivism in the society. Counselling service is one of the keys and necessary components in prisons guidance services. Adana (2004) noted that activities in counselling service are aimed at helping ex-convicts to effect change in their behavioural processes thereby acquiring ability to enhance their functioning, live a more productive and self-satisfying life. Counselling also aims at assisting ex-convicts to facilitate self-understanding so as to resolve any obstacle hindering their progress and those problems relating to their vocational, educational and socio-personal attainment. Similarly, the prison inmates in Nigerian prisons need to be assisted with professional counselling service in the area of vocation and education so as to obtain gainful employment after serving their terms.

4.3.2 Unavailability of Psychiatric and Vocational Training

Decree No. 9 of 1972 assigns responsibility to the Nigerian prison system to provide educational, vocational and therapeutic programmes so that inmates who wish to better themselves can do so during incarceration. Despite this policy mandate, respondents reported

that such programmes were not effectively implemented. Most said they did not receive meaningful rehabilitative therapy, and vocational provision was uneven and poorly resourced.

Respondents' accounts illustrate these shortcomings. R2 described routine labour rather than skills training:

> *"I was not taught any new trade or skill. I was more involved in labour activities like grass cutting and cleaning during my initial prison term here....."* (R2, 23, Male, Polygamous, SSCE, Bus Conductor)

R3 emphasised the absence of training and basic needs:

> "*We are not taught any new job here..... We are not even given food most times, unless our family members bring food for us. We are just suffering here."* (R3, 34, Male, Broken Home, HND, Engineer, Single)

R4, a bricklayer, noted the poor state of workshops and gendered resource gaps:

> *"Workshops were not well equipped. Skills taught were basic... no materials for women trades."* (R4, 40, Male, Bricklayer)

These testimonies show that, where vocational programmes exist, they are often undermined by inadequate equipment and materials. Psychiatric support was reported as almost entirely absent or irregular, limiting the therapeutic component of rehabilitation. This supports Ameh's (2010) critique that Nigerian prisons remain punitive centres rather than rehabilitative institutions.

Table 4.7: Access to Vocational Training and Psychiatric Support (R1-R12)

Respondent	Access to Vocational Training	Type of Training (if any)	Access to Psychiatric Support
R1	Yes	Carpentry	No
R2	No	Labour (grass cutting, cleaning)	No
R3	No	-	Irregular counselling
R4	Yes	Bricklaying (poorly	No

		equipped workshop)	
R5	No	-	No
R6	Yes	Catering	No
R7	Yes	Mechanics	No
R8	No	-	No
R9	Yes	Teaching skills	Irregular counselling
R10	Yes	Tailoring	No
R11	No	-	No
R12	Yes	Labour skills	No

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

Table 4.8:%age Access to Vocational Training and Psychiatric Support

Category	**Yes (%)**	**No (%)**	**Irregular (%)**	**Total (%)**
Vocational Training	58.3	41.7	0	100
Psychiatric Support	0	83.3	16.7	100

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

According to Tables 4.7 and 4.8, 58.3% of respondents reported some access to vocational training, while 41.7% had none. However, qualitative evidence shows that even those with access often encountered poorly equipped workshops and limited materials, reducing effectiveness. Also, 83.3% reported no access to psychiatric support, while the remaining 16.7% reported irregular counselling. None reported consistent psychiatric care, highlighting a critical gap in rehabilitative services.

These findings demonstrate that vocational training is inconsistently available and under-resourced, while psychiatric support is almost entirely absent. Together, they undermine the rehabilitative aims of the prison system and reinforce the punitive orientation noted by Ameh (2010).

4.3.3 Overcrowding and Poor Classification

Another major institutional determinant identified was overcrowding and poor classification of inmates. Respondents consistently reported that prisons were congested, with little or no separation between first-time offenders and hardened criminals. The quantitative evidence in Table 4.9 below shows that all respondents (100%) experienced overcrowding, while 58.3% specifically reported poor classification of inmates. This environment fosters negative peer influence, undermines rehabilitation, and increases the risk of recidivism.

Table 4.9: Respondents' Experiences of Overcrowding and Classification

Category	Yes (n)	Yes (%)	No (n)	No (%)
Overcrowding	12	100.0	0	0.0
Poor Classification	7	58.3	5	41.7

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

Respondents explained their experiences in detail:

> *"Cells are too full. We sleep on the floor, packed together. You learn bad things from others inside."* (R1, 42, Male, Single, BSc, Trader)

> *"There is no difference between those who committed small offences and those who committed bigger offences. We are all kept together."* (R6, 26, Male, Single)

> *"Overcrowding makes prison life unbearable. No privacy, no space, and you mix with people who teach you worse crimes."* (R12, 36, Male, Divorced)

These accounts show that overcrowding not only worsens living conditions but also facilitates the transmission of criminal behaviour.

Scholarly evidence supports these findings. Awopetu (2014) observed that Nigerian prisons house inmates far beyond their designed capacity, which hinders rehabilitation and reintegration goals. Alemika (2011) similarly argued that indiscriminate classification

reinforces criminal identities, as first-time offenders are socialised into more serious criminal networks. Akinwale (2010) highlighted that overcrowding leads to poor sanitation, inadequate feeding, and heightened inmate tensions, all of which obstruct reformative programmes. Jengeleski (2001) further contended that poor classification systems increase the risk of recidivism by exposing minor offenders to hardened criminals.

From the perspective of rehabilitation theory, overcrowding and poor classification directly obstruct the rehabilitative process. Instead of providing an environment conducive to reform, prisons become breeding grounds for criminal learning, where minor offenders are socialised into more serious criminal identities. From the labelling perspective, poor classification reinforces negative identities by grouping minor offenders with hardened criminals, thereby intensifying stigma and self-perception as "career criminals." This structural failure perpetuates recidivism, as inmates internalise these labels and struggle to reintegrate positively into society.

Thus, the evidence demonstrates that overcrowding and poor classification are not merely logistical problems but fundamental institutional weaknesses that undermine the rehabilitative mandate of the Nigerian prison system.

4.3.4 Absence of Post-Release Follow-Up

A recurring theme in the interviews was the absence of structured support for inmates after release. Respondents emphasised that without proper supervision, counselling, or reintegration programmes, many ex-prisoners relapse into crime. The lack of follow-up undermines rehabilitation and contributes to high recidivism rates. R7, who had been imprisoned four times, explained:

> *"Parole and supervision could help if properly done… officer checking on you, guiding you."* (R7, 42, Male, Divorced, Driver)

This highlights the importance of effective post-release monitoring and guidance. Respondents consistently noted that counselling and vocational support after release could help sustain behavioural change. As Adana (2004) observed, professional counselling supports vocational change and reduces recidivism. Other respondents reinforced this concern:

> *"Once you leave here, nobody cares. No officer follows up, no training continues. You just go back to the same environment that brought you here oooo."* (R5, 30, Female, Married, Unemployed, 2 Times)

> *"We are released without any plan. No counselling, no support. If you don't have family, you suffer. That is why many return."* (R10, 28, Male, Single, Salesperson, 2 Prison Terms)

These testimonies show that the absence of structured follow-up leaves ex-prisoners vulnerable to stigma, unemployment, and social isolation. Without supervision or counselling, the cycle of recidivism continues. Studies have equally indicated that the prevalence rate of recidivism appears to be influenced by the availability of post-release job training programmes (Jengeleski, 2001), community treatment center placement (Beck, 1981), and availability of pre- and post-release educational programmes (Blackburn, 2011; Rose and Nyre, 2009). From the perspective of rehabilitation theory, the absence of follow-up undermines behavioural change. From the labelling perspective, lack of reintegration support reinforces negative identities and perpetuates recidivism.

4.4 Psychosocial Determinants of Recidivism

Beyond institutional factors, psychosocial conditions play a central role in shaping recidivism. The psychosocial factors that were highlighted in this study were the experience of stigmatisation, re-socialisation with peers, and engaging in alcohol consumption and drug abuse.

4.4.1 Stigmatisation

Stigma emerged as one of the strongest psychosocial determinants of recidivism. Respondents were asked if they experienced any form of societal stigmatisation after their initial release from prison. Based on the content analysis of the responses, all of the respondents reported some form of stigmatisation from various members of the society, ranging from family members to employers, friends and acquaintances. This rejection undermined their reintegration and reinforced negative identities.

Table 4.10: Respondents' Experiences of Stigmatisation (R1-R12)

Category	Yes (n)	Yes (%)	No (n)	No (%)
Reported Stigma	9	75.0	3	25.0

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

This table shows that 9 respondents (75%) reported experiencing stigma after release, while only 3 respondents (25%) did not explicitly mention it. This indicates that stigmatisation is a widespread barrier to reintegration among recidivists. Below are some of the verbatim testimonies that illustrate the impact of stigma:

> *"My aunt did not allow me step in her house (a one room apartment). She said that I am a man that I should go and find work."* (40, Female, Broken Home, OND, Bricks Layer, Single)

> *"I went back to the place I was learning panel beating to ask if I can continue there. But my Oga did not agree. He said that he did not want bad name."* (R6, 26, Male, Polygamous Home, Primary, Panel Beater Trainee, Single)

> *"I am not free to go to church again. Every people are just looking at me somehow. Even in where I live, all the neighbours are making complain to the landlord that I should pack and go to another place."* (R12, 36, Male, Extended Family, Primary, Tricyclist, Divorced)

> *"In a particular job interview, everything was fine until they asked about gaps in my CV. When I explained that I was in prison during that period, the panel ended the interview quickly. I was so ashamed.*

Next time, I won't make the mistake of telling anyone that." (R1, 42, Male, Single Parent, Single, BSc, Trader)

Stigmatisation of ex-prisoners has been widely documented in Nigeria and other contexts. Alemika (2011) observed that societal rejection of ex-convicts reinforces criminal identities and obstructs reintegration. Ugwuoke (2010) argued that stigma, combined with unemployment, is a major driver of recidivism in Nigeria. Akinwale (2010) further noted that family rejection intensifies vulnerability, leaving ex-prisoners without social support. Adjustment of discharged prisoners in Nigeria has become a huge problem because society has come to view such discharged prisoners as social misfits who are not amenable to corrections. Such discharged prisoners are therefore stigmatised and treated as social pariahs. This rejection by society sometimes forces them back into crime. These findings confirm that stigma is not simply a personal experience but a structural barrier to rehabilitation.

From the perspective of rehabilitation theory, stigma undermines reintegration by denying ex-prisoners the social acceptance and opportunities necessary for behavioural change. Rehabilitation requires not only institutional programmes but also community support, which stigma erodes.

4.4.2 Alcohol Consumption and Drug Abuse

Alcohol consumption and drug abuse emerged as significant psychosocial determinants of recidivism. Respondents were asked if they engaged in substance abuse- either smoking or alcohol consumption. Respondents explained that substance use not only contributed to their initial offences but also increased the likelihood of re-offending after release. Addiction undermined rehabilitation by impairing judgment, reinforcing criminal networks, and obstructing reintegration.

Table 4.11: Respondents' Experiences of Alcohol Consumption and Drug Abuse (R1-R12)

Substance Use	Frequency	%	Reasons Given	Respondents
Alcohol	9	75%	Stress relief (6), Energy for work (3), Peer (5)	R2, R4, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R3
Smoking (Cigarettes)	4	33%	Social/Peer (3), Relaxation (1)	R2, R7, R8, R12
Indian Hemp	2	17%	Stay awake, cope with frustration	R8, R12
No Hard Drugs	12	100%	None reported	All
Total	**12**	**100%**		

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

The analysis of responses, as shown in Table 4.11, indicates that 75% of respondents (9 out of 12) reported using alcohol and/or smoking after their first release. None of the respondents admitted to hard drug use like cocaine or heroin. Indian hemp (marijuana) was mentioned by 2 respondents (17%, R8 and R12). Alcohol use was linked to stress relief (50%), work energy (25%), and peer influence (42%). This shows substance use as a coping mechanism, not a direct cause of crime. Below are some of their verbatim responses:

> *"Because of my work, I need to be strong to have energy to work, so I drink small quantity to keep myself strong. The work needs power and it has stress."* (R4, 40, Female, Broken Home, OND, Bricklayer).

> *"I used to drink beer and smoke cigar with my friends every night before we sleep. We just use it to make merriment and be happy."* (R2, 23, Male, Polygamous Home, SSCE, Bus Conductor).

> *"I engaged in alcohol consumption once in a while. But I don't smoke. Really, when I was frustrated because I lost my driving job, I used to drink a lot."* (R7, 42, Male, Extended Family, Primary, Driver).

> *"I drink heavily after work to forget my sorrow... smoked Indian hemp to keep awake during night drives. Even when I say I no go take am, I go still take am."* (R12, 36, Male, Divorced, Extended, Tricyclist)

> *"I smoked weed and drank with friends. It gave temporary relief but made me agree to risky plans. Once you start, you cannot stop. Drugs dey everywhere na. Even inside prison, people still dey take am."* (R8, 32, Male, Nuclear, Single, Unemployed)

These accounts show that substance abuse not only triggers criminal behaviour but also persists within prison environments, undermining rehabilitation efforts. Substance abuse has long been recognised as a major factor in recidivism. Ugwuoke (2010) found that alcohol and drug dependence significantly increase the likelihood of re-offending among Nigerian ex-convicts. Akinwale (2010) argued that addiction impairs reintegration by limiting employment opportunities and reinforcing criminal peer networks. Addiction is one of the major consequences of substance consumption. According to Obioha, (2002), addiction is a condition that results when a person ingests a substance (alcohol, cocaine, nicotine) or engages in an activity (gambling) that can be pleasurable but the continued use of which becomes compulsive and interferes with ordinary life responsibilities, such as work or relationships, or health. Users may not be aware that their behaviour is out of control and causing problems for themselves and others. Alemika (2011) further observed that prisons themselves often fail to control the circulation of drugs, thereby perpetuating substance abuse among inmates. International studies also confirm this pattern: Gendreau et al. (1996) demonstrated that substance abuse is one of the strongest predictors of recidivism across correctional systems. In 2012, according to Eric Allison, the United Kingdom Alcohol and Crime Commission carried out a survey of 267 prisoners. 70% of inmates who responded said they had been using alcohol when they committed the crime for which they were convicted. Similarly, in 2012, a survey was done by the United Kingdom Inspectorate of Prisons, and it was discovered that 60% of those entering prison with an alcohol problem left custody with their addiction not addressed.

From the perspective of rehabilitation theory, alcohol and drug abuse obstruct behavioural change by impairing judgment and reinforcing dependency. Effective rehabilitation requires structured treatment programmes, yet respondents reported that such interventions were absent or ineffective. Thus, alcohol consumption and drug abuse are critical psychosocial

determinants of recidivism. Without targeted interventions such as counselling, addiction treatment, and community support, rehabilitation efforts within prisons will remain ineffective.

4.4.3 Emotional Stress and Hopelessness

Emotional stress and a sense of hopelessness were reported by all respondents following their release from prison. Many described feelings of shame, guilt, depression, and anxiety, which were closely linked to the stigma of imprisonment and the perception of personal failure. These negative emotions often pushed them into isolation, excessive drinking, or returning to crime as a way of escaping their distress. The burden of stress appeared to be most severe among respondents with higher education, such as B.Sc. holders, who felt that their qualifications had been wasted, and among women, who faced additional stigma in relation to marriage and family acceptance.

Table 4.12: Emotional Stress by Demographic Factors

Factor	**Respondents Affected**	**% Affected**	**Key Stress Types Reported**
Education (Tertiary)	4/4	100%	Shame of wasted degrees, depression
Gender (Female)	3/3	100%	Marriage stigma, family guilt
High Recidivism (3+ times)	4/4	100%	Hopelessness, suicidal thoughts
All Respondents	12/12	100%	Anxiety, isolation
Total	**12/12**	**100%**	

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

Table 4.12 demonstrates that emotional stress was reported by every respondent (100%). The intensity of this stress varied across groups: educated respondents described the deepest feelings of shame and wasted potential, all female respondents highlighted the unique stigma

they faced in relation to marriage and family acceptance, and those with repeated prison terms expressed profound hopelessness. In short, stress cut across all categories of respondents, showing that it is a universal consequence of imprisonment and release.

According to rehabilitation theory, counselling and structured psychological support are essential to help ex-prisoners develop coping skills and rebuild their lives. However, as noted earlier in Section 4.3.1, Nigerian prisons provide little or no counselling, leaving inmates to struggle alone with these challenges. Scholarly evidence reinforces this finding. Wallerstein et al. (1998) linked family disruption to emotional problems and subsequent criminal behaviour, while Hughes et al. (1991) observed that stress arising from broken homes significantly increases psychiatric risks among offenders. Together, these studies highlight that without counselling and family support, emotional stress becomes a powerful driver of recidivism.

4.4.4 Peer Pressure

Peer influence came out as a major psychosocial factor in the interviews. After release, many respondents went back to old friends who were also ex-convicts or into crime. These peers gave acceptance when family and community rejected them. The friends encouraged risky behaviour like night jobs, sharp deals, or transporting criminals. This shows how peers can pull people back into crime. All transport workers (drivers, conductors) mentioned strong peer pressure, and most traders too.

Table 4.13: Peer Influence by Occupation

Occupation Group	Respondents Affected	% Affected	Some Key Examples from Transcripts
Transport (Driver, Conductor, Tricyclist)	4/4	100%	R2: *"The ones who accepted me were my fellow boys at the park, some of whom are also ex-convicts. When there is no money, they suggest we do 'sharp work'-like snatching phones late at night or helping thieves escape."*

			R12: *"Fellow drivers encourage risky jobs like transporting criminals at night for quick money. They tell stories of successful operations with big pay."* R7: *"I drifted closer to other ex-convicts I met in town because they understood my situation. Some of them were into sharp practices."*
Trading/Sales	4/5	80%	R11: *"In the market, some friends say 'be smart and grab any opportunity, legal or not.' They would say, 'customer no dey ask where phone sleep; him just dey ask if e dey work.'"* R1: *"Over time, I drifted closer to other ex-convicts I met in town because they understood my situation. Some of them were into sharp practices. The more I spent time with them, the more normal those things started to look."* R9: *"Trading colleagues advised me to 'do whatever you must to recover,' encouraging risky deals to clear debts."*
Unskilled/Other	2/3	67%	R6: *"When there was no work for days, hunger drove me to join some boys who steal side mirrors and batteries at night. They were the only ones who didn't judge me."* R8: *"Because of that, I spent more time with some old friends who were into break-ins. Among them, I felt less judged, but that is also how I got lured back into crime."*
Total	**10/12**	**83%**	

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

Table 4.13 shows peer influence affected 83% of respondents (10 out of 12). Transport workers faced it most (100%), as they work in parks and junctions where ex-convicts gather and share crime stories. Traders had high rates too (80%) from market gossip and quick-money deals. The findings also support rehabilitation theory, which argues prisons should break these peer networks through structured aftercare and vocational training. Instead, overcrowding in prison exposes inmates to criminal peers inside, while post-release stigma drives them back to the same networks outside. Otu (2015) confirms this pattern in Nigerian prisons, where weak rehabilitation fails to counter peer-driven recidivism (Tenibiaje, 2013; Ashibi Adams, 2012).

4.4.5 Broken Family and Family Support Gaps

Broken family structures and weak support after release were common in the interviews. As already shown in Table 4.4, most respondents came from polygamous (42%), broken (25%), or extended families (25%). These homes had competition, neglect, or conflict. After prison, family gave little practical help and much criticism. This left ex-convicts feeling rejected and pushed them toward peers and crime.

Table 4.14: Family Support Levels

Support Level	**Frequency**	**%**	**Family Types Affected**
Emotional Only	6	50	Polygamous, Broken
Limited/None	5	42	Extended, Divorced
Good	1	8	Nuclear
Total	**12**	**100**	

Source: Fieldwork (2017)

Table 4.14 indicates that the majority of respondents (92%) reported poor family support after their release from prison. Only one respondent (8%), who came from a nuclear family background, stated that they received meaningful assistance. In contrast, those from polygamous and broken homes described receiving only limited emotional encouragement, without financial help or job opportunities. Extended family members occasionally provided shelter, but respondents emphasised that this came with little trust or genuine reintegration support.

This finding highlights the critical role of family in the rehabilitation process. According to rehabilitation theory, families are expected to form part of the aftercare system, offering emotional, financial, and social support to help ex-prisoners reintegrate successfully. However, the Nigerian prison system does not actively involve families in rehabilitation

planning, leaving many ex-inmates vulnerable to rejection and isolation. Here are some of their narrations:

> *"My husband tried his best, but his family saw me as a disgrace to their name. They kept telling him to divorce me because of my prison record. It was really hard."* (R5, 30, Female, Married, BSc, Unemployed).

> *"After second prison, my wife left completely with our child. My Uncle allowed me under his roof but give me serious rules and na everyday im dey reminded me of the shame I brought to the family."* (R7, 42, Male, Divorced, Extended Family, Primary, Driver).

> *"My mother accepted me but complained every time that I was disgracing her. Our relatives call me 'that girl that went to prison."* (R10, 28, Male, Single, SSCE, Unemployed).

Scholarly evidence reinforces this point. Wells and Rankin (2011) found that children from single-parent households are 10-15% more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour compared to those from intact families. Wadsworth (2009) linked early parental separation to higher risks of robbery and assault, showing how weak family structures contribute to criminal behaviour. Wallerstein et al. (1998) further argued that when families withdraw support after imprisonment, the likelihood of recidivism becomes almost certain, as ex-prisoners are left without the social and emotional resources needed to change their behaviour.

Taken together, both the fieldwork data and existing literature demonstrate that family support is a decisive factor in reducing recidivism. Without active involvement of families in aftercare, rehabilitation efforts remain incomplete, and ex-prisoners are more likely to relapse into crime.

4.5 Discussion of Results

The findings presented in Chapter Four reveal that a combination of socio-demographic, institutional, and psychosocial factors shapes recidivism in Enugu Prison. These determinants interact to create conditions that make re-offending highly likely. The research questions

guiding this study sought to identify the socio-demographic predictors of recidivism, examine institutional practices within the prison system, and explore psychosocial challenges faced by recidivist inmates. The results show that young age, male gender, unstable family backgrounds, low educational attainment, and informal occupations are significant socio-demographic predictors. Institutional weaknesses such as poor counselling, overcrowding, and lack of aftercare further exacerbate the problem. Psychosocial pressures including stigma, peer influence, family rejection, substance abuse, and emotional stress also play decisive roles. These findings are best explained through the theoretical lenses outlined in Chapter Two, with Rehabilitation Theory serving as the main anchor, supported by Social Disorganisation, Social Control, and Self-Control theories.

4.5.1 Socio-Demographic Predictors

4.5.1.1 Age as a Predictor of Recidivism

Table 4.2 shows that 75% of respondents were under the age of 40. This finding suggests that young age is a strong predictor of recidivism, as younger individuals are more prone to risk-taking and impulsive behaviour. Katsiyannis and Archwamety (1997) and Miner (2002) similarly found that younger offenders are more likely to re-offend due to immaturity and poor decision-making. Self-Control Theory explains this by emphasising that low self-control in youth manifests in impulsivity and criminal behaviour.

4.5.1.2 Gender as a Predictor of Recidivism

Table 4.2.1 indicates that 83% of respondents were male. This reflects broader criminological patterns where men are more likely to engage in repeat offending. Wilson (2009) observed that male offenders often follow different crime pathways compared to females, with weaker social bonds and greater exposure to peer influence. Social Control Theory explains this by

highlighting that weaker family and community bonds among men reduce the restraints against criminal behaviour.

4.5.1.3 Family Background and Early Socialisation

Tables 4.3 and 4.7 reveal that 92% of respondents came from non-nuclear family backgrounds, including polygamous and broken homes. Such family structures provided little financial or emotional support after release. Wells and Rankin (2011) found that single-parent households increase delinquency by 10-15%, while Wadsworth (2009) linked early parental separation to robbery and assault. Social Control Theory explains this by showing that weak family bonds fail to provide the social restraint necessary to prevent re-offending.

4.5.1.4 Educational Attainment and Recidivism

Table 4.2.4 shows that 67% of respondents had low educational attainment. This limited their employability and increased vulnerability to crime. Tenibiaje (2013) argued that prison education is essential for rehabilitation, as it equips inmates with skills for reintegration. Rehabilitation Theory supports this finding by emphasising that education is a key component of reform, yet Nigerian prisons fail to provide adequate educational opportunities.

4.5.1.5 Employment Status and Recidivism

Table 4.2.5 shows that 75% of respondents were engaged in informal jobs prior to imprisonment. This reflects poor economic stability and limited access to formal employment. Ogunkola (2011) noted that unemployment and informal work increase the likelihood of criminal behaviour. Social Disorganisation Theory explains this by linking poor neighbourhoods, lack of jobs, and weak social structures to persistent crime.

4.5.2 Institutional Factors

4.5.2.1 Inadequate Counselling and Vocational Training

Table 4.4 shows that counselling and vocational training were either absent or ineffective. Respondents reported that they received little or no psychological support or skill acquisition. Rehabilitation Theory highlights counselling and training as central to reform, yet Nigerian prisons fail to deliver these programmes. Ameh (2010) similarly observed that poor rehabilitation services in Nigerian prisons contribute to high recidivism rates.

4.5.2.2 Overcrowding in Prison Facilities

Section 4.3.3 revealed that all respondents (100%) experienced overcrowding. Cells were congested, with no separation between first-time offenders and hardened criminals. This environment fosters criminal learning rather than rehabilitation. Social Disorganisation Theory explains this by showing that disorganised environments, such as overcrowded prisons, breed crime and reinforce deviant behaviour.

4.5.2.3 Absence of Aftercare and Follow-Up Support

Respondents reported that there was no structured aftercare or follow-up support after release. Rehabilitation Theory emphasises that reintegration requires continuous support, yet Nigerian prisons neglect this aspect. Without aftercare, ex-prisoners face stigma, unemployment, and isolation, which almost inevitably lead to re-offending.

4.5.3 Psychosocial Factors

4.5.3.1 Impact of Stigmatisation

Table 4.5 shows that 75% of respondents experienced stigma after release. They were rejected by family, employers, and communities. Ikoh (2011) found that stigma blocks reintegration and reinforces criminal identities. Rehabilitation Theory explains that stigma obstructs the reintegration process, making recidivism more likely.

4.5.3.2 Influence of Peer Networks

Table 4.6 shows that peer influence was a major factor in recidivism. Respondents explained that old friends encouraged them to return to crime. Otu (2015) similarly found that peer networks strongly influence re-offending. Social Control Theory explains this by showing that when family bonds are weak, peers become the dominant influence, often leading to crime.

4.5.3.3 Deficits in Family Support

Table 4.7 shows that 92% of respondents reported poor family support after release. Families provided little financial or emotional assistance, leaving ex-prisoners vulnerable. Wallerstein et al. (1998) argued that withdrawal of family support after imprisonment makes recidivism almost certain. Social Control Theory explains this by showing that weak family bonds fail to restrain criminal behaviour.

4.5.3.4 Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Table 4.8 shows that 75% of respondents reported alcohol consumption or smoking, while 58% admitted to drug abuse. Obioha (2002) found that substance use is a major driver of recidivism in Nigeria. Self-Control Theory explains this by linking low impulse control to substance abuse, which becomes a coping mechanism for stress and stigma.

4.5.3.5 Emotional Stress and Psychological Strain

Table 4.8 also shows that all respondents (100%) experienced emotional stress, including shame, guilt, depression, and anxiety. Hughes et al. (1991) observed that stress from broken homes worsens psychiatric risks among offenders. Rehabilitation Theory explains that counselling is necessary to address emotional stress, yet Nigerian prisons provide none.

4.5.4 Theoretical Interpretation of Findings

ii. Rehabilitation Theory: Nigerian prisons fail to reform offenders due to poor programmes, lack of counselling, and absence of aftercare.

iii. Social Disorganisation Theory: Broken neighbourhoods and overcrowded prisons create disorganised environments that breed crime.

iv. Social Control Theory: Weak family and community bonds, combined with peer influence, fail to restrain criminal behaviour.

v. Self-Control Theory: Low self-control from childhood manifests in impulsivity, substance abuse, and poor coping mechanisms.

4.5.5 Contribution to Existing Literature

The findings of this study confirm earlier Nigerian works such as Abrifor (2010) and Soyombo (2009), which reported high rates of recidivism linked to institutional and social failures. However, this study adds new insights by incorporating the voices of recidivist inmates themselves by providing qualitative evidence of their lived experiences. By focusing on Enugu Prison, the study offers a context-specific analysis that highlights how institutional weaknesses and psychosocial pressures interact to perpetuate recidivism. This contribution deepens understanding of recidivism in Nigeria and provides evidence-based recommendations for strengthening rehabilitation and reintegration.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the summary of research findings obtained on recidivism in Nigerian Prison, with Enugu Prison as a case study. The chapter also explains the implication of research findings on the observed result, suggestion and recommendations were also put forward based on the problems observed in the study.

5.2 Summary

This study examined the factors influencing recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison, Nigeria, with a focus on understanding the experiences and perceptions of recidivist offenders. The study was motivated by the persistent problem of repeat offending in Nigeria despite the rehabilitative mandate of the correctional system. Guided by Rehabilitation Theory, the research sought to explore the socio-demographic, institutional, and psychosocial factors that contribute to recidivism and to assess the effectiveness of existing rehabilitation efforts within the prison system.

A qualitative case study design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling was used to select twelve recidivist inmates in Enugu Prison who had previously been incarcerated and re-admitted into custody. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted within the prison facility. The interview data were transcribed and analysed using content and thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and dominant themes related to recidivist behaviour.

The findings revealed that recidivism among inmates in Enugu Prison is influenced by a combination of interrelated factors. Socio-demographic factors such as young age, low educational attainment, unstable family backgrounds, unemployment, and limited vocational skills were found to predispose individuals to repeat offending. Institutional factors, including inadequate rehabilitation programmes, poor vocational training facilities, limited counselling services, insufficient professional staff, overcrowding of prison facilities, poor classification of inmates, and the absence of structured aftercare programmes, were identified as major contributors to recidivism. In addition, psychosocial factors such as social stigma, family and community rejection, peer pressure, weak family support after release, substance abuse, emotional stress, and economic hardship significantly increased the likelihood of reoffending after release.

Overall, the study established that recidivism in Enugu Prison is largely a consequence of systemic rehabilitation failures and adverse post-release social conditions rather than an inherent tendency of offenders to commit crime. The findings underscore the need for comprehensive rehabilitation strategies, effective reintegration support, and community-based interventions aimed at reducing recidivism and enhancing public safety. The study contributes to criminological knowledge by providing qualitative, experience-based insights into recidivism within the Nigerian correctional system and offers practical implications for correctional policy and practice.

5.3 Conclusion

From this study, the various socio-demographic, institutional and psychosocial causes of recidivism in Enugu Prison noted, which include deplorable prison conditions, poverty, unemployment, family problems, residential factors, alcoholism, drug abuse, low level of education, negative public attitude towards ex-convicts, overcrowding of prison facilities,

poor classification of inmates, weak family support after release, emotional stress, and peer influence. Among all these factors, this research concludes that the most prevailing cause of recidivism is the institutional factor. The prison is supposed to be the place where all factors are supposed to have been dealt with and corrected, by preparing the inmates ahead of their release into the society. The Nigerian Prison has failed in this aspect. Inmates are released into the society without an adequate provision of reintegration programme and follow-up service. The major goal of follow-up service is to appraise the success of services. There is need to put in place an effective counselling and rehabilitation structure for prisoners during their period of incarceration. More importantly, follow up services should be included into these structures. The follow-up service is a service of monitoring ex-convicts progress after being released from incarceration. Omotosho (2015) argued that follow-up services of ex-convicts are efficient ways which correctional institution can utilize for measuring the effects of counselling and rehabilitation during incarceration rendered by the prison. Follow-up services involve paying regular visit to ex-convicts to evaluate how they are performing in their new environment. The purpose of the follow up is to appraise whether the ex-convicts are able to adjust adequately and positively in the new environment, new job, new position etc. This follow-up service is lacking in all Nigerian Prisons and this has prompted prison inmates to commit crime after being released and this has led to increase in recidivism. The needed incentive to excel in the training given in the prisons has been neglected. This necessary impetus to excel by prison inmates is the follow-up service which will monitor the ex-convicts and newly discharged offenders.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study on recidivism and inmates' views on rehabilitation in Enugu Prison, the following recommendations are made to strengthen the Nigerian prison system, improve rehabilitation, and support the reintegration of former inmates into society:

i. The Nigerian Prison Service (NPS) should place more emphasis on rehabilitation rather than just detention by making structured rehabilitation programmes part of its official policies. This should include compulsory vocational training, educational programmes, and psychological counselling for inmates to increase their chances for personal development, while also addressing emotional stress and substance abuse problems identified among inmates.

ii. Rehabilitation programmes should be checked regularly to see how effective they are, identify gaps, and monitor recidivism rates. Policies should require periodic reports on programme outcomes so that the NCS can be held accountable.

iii. Prison officers and programme facilitators should receive special training in psychosocial support, counselling skills, and post-release reintegration strategies. This will help them run rehabilitation programmes more effectively and enable them to address issues such as peer influence and weak family support that often push ex-convicts back into crime.

iv. The name, "Nigerian Prison Service" should be changed to "Nigerian Correctional Service", and all official documents, programmes, and communications should use the term "Correctional" instead of "Prison" to reflect the rehabilitation and reintegration mandate of the Nigerian Prison Service. This change in language can shape public perception and internal policy to focus more on rehabilitation than on detention alone.

v. Facilities should be expanded and better organised to reduce congestion and allow proper classification of inmates into first-time and repeat offenders, making rehabilitation and management more targeted.

vi. Those awaiting trial should have their cases processed more quickly to prevent unnecessary prolonged detention, which contributes to overcrowding and weakens rehabilitation efforts.

vii. The NPS should work closely with NGOs and community organisations to offer mentorship, follow-up counselling, and job placement support for released inmates. This will help address the lack of guidance that many former inmates reported after their release, while also countering negative peer networks with positive mentorship.

viii. Parole should be used more systematically as a way to support smooth and supervised reintegration into the community while helping to reduce repeat offending.

ix. Rehabilitation programmes should be reviewed from time to time and adjusted based on inmates' experiences and suggestions, so that they remain relevant and effective.

x. Alternatives such as fines, restitution, community service, and restorative justice approaches should be used more often for minor offences to reduce overcrowding and promote rehabilitation without long-term incarceration.

xi. Community sensitisation programmes should be used to educate the public on the importance of rehabilitation and the need to accept former inmates. This will support successful reintegration and help reduce repeat offending, while also tackling stigma and negative public attitudes.

xii. Families and community-based organisations should be involved in rehabilitation and reintegration plans so they can provide strong social support networks that address psychosocial factors linked to recidivism, including weak family support after release.

xiii. The NPS, together with civil society groups, should run public campaigns that show the benefits of rehabilitation for the whole society, and help build a culture that supports offender reintegration.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Study

Based on the findings and scope of the present study on recidivism in Enugu Prison, the following areas are suggested for further studies:

i. Future research should conduct longitudinal studies that follow released inmates over a period of time in order to assess the long-term effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes and their influence on recidivism.

ii. Further studies should evaluate the effectiveness of rehabilitation, vocational training, educational, and psychological support programmes in Nigerian correctional facilities, with emphasis on how these programmes reduce repeat offending.

iii. Research may be carried out to examine the impact of specialised training for prison officers and rehabilitation programme facilitators on the successful implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration strategies.

iv. Future studies should investigate the role of non-governmental organisations, parole supervision, mentorship, and job placement support in facilitating the reintegration of former inmates and reducing recidivism.

v. Further research could explore community and family attitudes towards former inmates and assess how social acceptance, stigma, and support networks influence reintegration and repeat offending.

vi. Comparative cross-state studies should be conducted across different correctional facilities in Nigeria to identify best practices, regional differences, and institutional challenges related to rehabilitation and recidivism.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO RESPONDENT

Faculty of Social Sciences,
Department of Criminology and Security Studies,
National Open University of Nigeria,
Enugu Study Centre,
Enugu.
4th October, 2017.

Dear Respondent,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

I am Jimoh Olalekan Idowu, a student of Criminology and Security Studies at the National Open University of Nigeria. I am currently conducting a research project titled *"Recidivism in Nigerian Prison: A Case Study of Enugu Prison."* The purpose of this study is to understand the factors influencing repeat offending among inmates, with a focus on institutional, psychosocial, and programmatic factors affecting rehabilitation outcomes.

Your participation in this study is highly valued, as your insights as a recidivist will provide important perspectives that can help improve rehabilitation and reintegration efforts in Nigerian prisons. All information you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your identity will not be disclosed in any report or publication resulting from this study, and your responses will be anonymised to protect your privacy.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question or withdraw from the interview at any time without any penalty. The data collected will be used solely for academic purposes and will not be shared with any third party without your consent.

Thank you for considering my request. I appreciate your time and cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Jimoh Olalekan Idowu
Department of Criminology and Security Studies
National Open University of Nigeria
NOU144459549
Researcher

APPENDIX II

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR RECIDIVISTS OF ENUGU PRISON

Study Title: Recidivism in Nigerian Prison: A Case Study of Enugu Prison
Purpose: To gather recidivists' insights on institutional, psychosocial, and programmatic factors influencing repeat offending and rehabilitation outcomes.
Respondent Profile: Recidivists currently incarcerated in Enugu Prison

Section 1: Socio-demographic and Contextual Information (Research Objective 1)

i. What is your age, gender, and marital status?
ii. What is your highest educational qualification and employment status before this incarceration?
iii. How many times have you been incarcerated, including this current term?
iv. Did you participate in any rehabilitation programmes during previous incarcerations? If yes, what type?
v. What support (from family, friends, community, or none) did you receive after previous releases?

Section 2: Institutional Factors Influencing Recidivism (Research Objective 2)

i. How would you describe the conditions and treatment you experienced in the correctional facility during previous incarcerations?
ii. How did overcrowding, access to programmes, or classification of inmates (first-time vs. repeat offenders) affect your rehabilitation experience?
iii. What skills or training opportunities were available in prison? Were the workshops and facilities well-equipped?
iv. How did the provision of basic needs (food, medical care, beddings) and treatment of illness affect your readiness for lawful living after release?

Section 3: Psychosocial Factors Affecting Recidivism (Research Objective 3)

i. What personal, family, or social challenges did you face after your release that influenced your return to crime?
ii. How did family support, peer influence, or community acceptance affect your behaviour after release?
iii. In what ways did emotional stress, stigma, lack of support, or substance abuse contribute to your re-offending?
iv. What is your experience with public discrimination or attitude towards ex-prisoners?

Section 4: Effectiveness of Rehabilitation Programmes (Research Objective 4)

i. What rehabilitation programmes did you participate in during incarceration, and how useful were they to you after release?
ii. Which skills or training, if any, helped you most in trying to avoid re-offending?
iii. What challenges did you face in applying what you learned during rehabilitation once you returned to society?
iv. How would you rate the general performance of rehabilitation services in this prison?

Section 5: Strategies to Reduce Recidivism (Research Objective 5)

i. What support do you think would have helped you avoid returning to crime after your previous release?
ii. How do you think parole, early release supervision, or non-custodial measures could help reduce repeat offending?
iii. What changes should be made in the correctional system to help inmates reintegrate successfully?
iv. Based on your experience, what is the main reason ex-convicts relapse into crime?

APPENDIX IV

UNUSED KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STAFF OF ENUGU PRISON

Study Title: Recidivism in Nigerian Prison: A Case Study of Enugu Prison
Purpose: To gather expert insights on institutional, psychosocial, and programmatic factors influencing repeat offending and rehabilitation outcomes.
Respondent Profile: Prison officers, rehabilitation coordinators, counsellors, administrators in Enugu Prison and other relevant experts.

Section A: Demographic and Contextual Information (Aligned with Research Question 1: What institutional factors influence recidivism in Enugu Prison?)

i. Age (in years)
ii. Gender
iii. Position/role in the Prison
iv. Years of experience in corrections/relevant field
v. Highest educational qualification
vi. Area of professional specialisation (e.g., counselling, administration, rehabilitation programmes)
vii. Any prior training in inmate rehabilitation or criminology
viii. Number of times each respondent has been involved with recidivists
ix. Typical duration of incarceration per recidivist (short-term, medium, long-term)
x. Common types of offences among recidivists you work with

Section 1: Institutional Factors Influencing Recidivism (Aligned with Research Question 1: What institutional factors influence recidivism in Enugu Prison?)

i. What institutional factors (facility infrastructure, staff capacity, rehabilitation programs) contribute most to recidivism among inmates?
ii. How does the classification of inmates (first-time vs. repeat offenders) affect rehabilitation outcomes?
iii. How are rehabilitation programs monitored and evaluated, and what challenges exist in ensuring they effectively reduce recidivism?

Section 2: Psychosocial Factors Affecting Recidivism (Aligned with Research Question 2: What psychosocial factors affect inmate behaviour post-release?)

i. Which social and psychological factors most influence inmates' likelihood of re-offending (family support, peer influence, mental health, community attitudes)?
ii. How does previous exposure to rehabilitation programs and post-release support systems affect inmates' behaviour?
iii. What role do community engagement and social support play in the reintegration of ex-inmates?

Section 3: Effectiveness of Rehabilitation Programs (Aligned with Research Question 3: How effective are rehabilitation programs in reducing recidivism?)

i. Which rehabilitation programs have been most effective in reducing re-offending, and why?
ii. How are inmates' perspectives and prior recidivism history incorporated into the design or improvement of rehabilitation programs?
iii. What gaps exist in current rehabilitation programs, and how could these be addressed to reduce repeat offences?

Section 4: Strategies to Reduce Recidivism (Aligned with Research Question 4: What strategies can be implemented to reduce re-offending among inmates?)

i. How effective are parole, early release, or non-custodial measures (fines, restitution, restorative justice) in reintegrating inmates?
ii. Based on your observations, what community-based initiatives or partnerships best support ex-inmates' successful reintegration?
iii. What practical strategies would you prioritise to reduce recidivism in Enugu Prison, considering institutional, psychosocial, and programmatic factors?

APPENDIX V

PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA TO THE ENUGU PRISON HEADQUARTERS

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

(OFFICE OF THE STUDY CENTRE DIRECTOR)

ENUGU STUDY CENTRE
Nike - Lake Raod,
Enugu,
Enugu State.
E-mail: enugucentre@noun.edu.ng

Headquarters:
14-16 Ahmadu Bello Way,
PMB 80067, Victoria Island,
Lagos, Nigeria.
Mobile: +234 806 310 2206
+234 809 684 3617
+234 812 657 5325
+234 805 259 2478

NIGERIAN PRISONS SERVICE
ENUGU STATE COMMAND
RECEIVED
10/10/2017

NOUN/ESC/GEN/20/VOL1/31

27th September, 2017.

The Controller of Prisons,
Enugu State Command,
Enugu.

Dear Sir,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The bearer, **JIMOH OLALEKAN IDOWU** with matriculation number **NOU144459548** is a 400 level student of Criminology and Security Studies, Faculty of Social Science, National Open University of Nigeria, Enugu Study Centre.

Please render all necessary assistance to enable him have interview with the inmates who are recidivists for his research project.

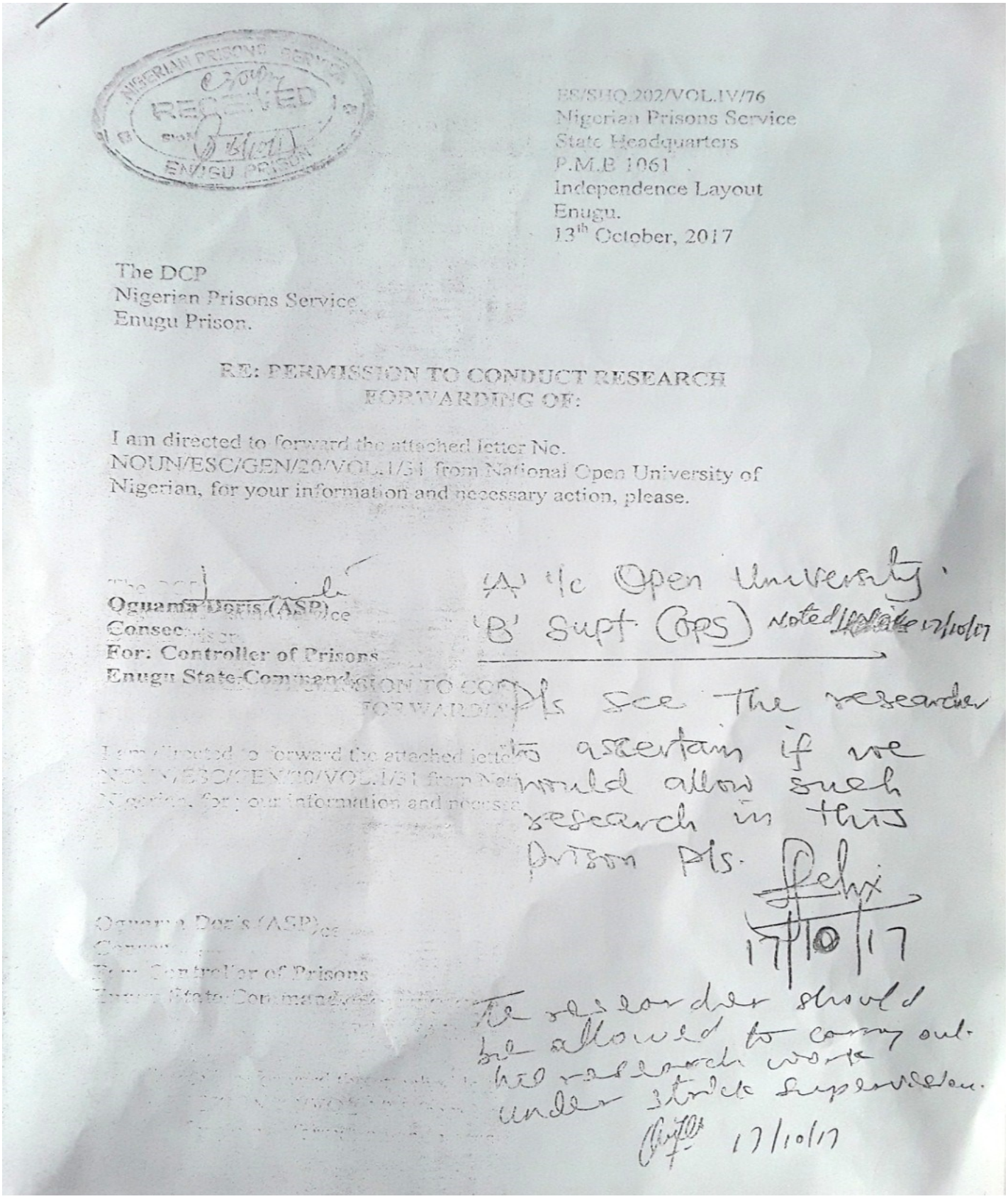
Thanks for your cooperation.

Mr. Lawrence U. Iyi
For: Ag. Study Centre Director.

I/c Enugu Prison
Plse deal
10/10/17

APPENDIX VI

PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE ENUGU PRISON HEADQUARTERS TO THE CONVICT PRISON



NIGERIAN PRISONS SERVICE
RECEIVED
ENUGU PRISON

ES/SHQ.202/VOL.IV/76
Nigerian Prisons Service
State Headquarters
P.M.B 1061
Independence Layout
Enugu.
13th October, 2017

The DCP
Nigerian Prisons Service
Enugu Prison.

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
FORWARDING OF:

I am directed to forward the attached letter No. NOUN/ESC/GEN/20/VOL.1/51 from National Open University of Nigerian, for your information and necessary action, please.

Oguama Doris (ASP)
Secretary
For: Controller of Prisons
Enugu State Command

'A' I/c Open University.
'B' Supt (OPS) noted 17/10/17

Pls see the researcher ascertain if we would allow such research in this prison Pls.

17/10/17

The researcher should be allowed to carry out her research work under strict supervision.

17/10/17

APPENDIX VII

PERMISSION LETTER FROM RESEARCHER'S SUPERVISOR

Professor Obiageli Omeje B.Sc., M.Sc., Ph.D.

Professor of Clinical Psychology

Department of Psychology
Faculty of the Social Sciences
Enugu State University of Science & Technology, Enugu.

Phone: 07035804421

e-mail: obyomeje@yahoo.com

NIGERIAN PRISONS SERVICE
ENUGU STATE COMMAND
RECEIVED
DATE 5/10/2017

4th October, 2017.

The Controller of Prisons,

Enugu State Command,

Enugu.

Dear Sir,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The bearer **JIMOH OLALEKAN IDOWU** with matriculation number **NOU144459549** is a 400 level student of Criminology and Security Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, National Open University of Nigeria, Enugu Study Centre.

Please render all necessary assistance needed to enable him have interview with the inmates who are recidivists, on his research project.

Yours truly,

Professor Obiageli Omeje. Phd